

CONGESTION AND DEPOPULATION: A STUDY IN
RURAL CONTRASTS BETWEEN WEST LEWIS AND
WEST SUTHERLAND

Peggie Muriel Hobson

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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A study in rural contrasts between
West Lewis and West Sutherland

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Thesis submitted to the University of St. Andrews
in application for the degree of Ph.D.

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CERTIFICATE

I certify that Peggie Muriel Hobson has
spent eight terms at Research Work in St. Andrews,
that she has fulfilled the conditions of Ordinance
No. 16 (St. Andrews) and that she is qualified to
submit the accompanying Thesis in application for
the degree of Ph.D.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the following Thesis is based on my own reading, research work and field work, that it is my own composition, and that it has not previously been presented for a Higher Degree.

The research was carried out in St. Andrews and in Edinburgh where much time was spent in the National Library, at the Scottish Land Court, the New Register House and the Department of Agriculture. Field work was carried out on numerous occasions between 1946 and 1950 in Sutherland and in Lewis and also in the other islands of the Hebrides. At times I have collaborated with the West Highland Survey and with the Third Statistical Account for Scotland.

CAREER

Degree

I obtained the degree of B.Sc.(Special), London, with First Class Honours in Geography and with Botany as subsidiary subject from Bedford College for Women in June 1940.

In June 1941 I passed the Diploma Examination in Education of the University of Oxford.

Teaching Experience

From September 1941 until July 1943 I was responsible for the teaching of Geography at Strathallan School, Forgardenny, Perthshire.

In September 1943 I was appointed Lecturer in Geography at Homerton Training College, Cambridge, which I left in July 1945.

In October, 1945 I was appointed Temporary Assistant Lecturer in Geography at the University of St.Andrews. In 1946 I was promoted to a Grade III Lectureship which I held until October 1950 when I was granted a Grade II Lectureship.

Research

I have been engaged on research on the crofting districts of Scotland since 1946 and I now wish to

submit the accompanying Thesis for the Ph.D.degree of St.Andrews University.

In March 1951 I was awarded a research grant by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland in order to make a study of the Highland Scottish settlements in Nova Scotia. For this purpose I spent three months in Canada during the summer of 1951.

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Lewis is the north pairt if this ile, and the maist also, faire and well inhabite at the coste, ane fertile fruitfull countrey, for the most pairt all beire, with four parochie kirkes, and with an castell callit Stoernaway. In this ile ther are many scheipe, for it is very guid for the same, for they lay forth over one mures and glenis, and enter never in a house, and ther wool is bot anes in the zeire plukit aff them in some fauldís.

Dean Monro 1594

The County of Sutherland is the most remote in Great Britain, and also the most rugged and least improveable. Excepting some inconsiderable tracts along the shores, it is mostly composed of mountains or rock and strata, extensive morasses and impassable bogs: the strata near the base of the mountains and in the bottoms are composed of white marble used in buildings and as lime for manure. But the misery of the inhabitants arising from the severity of the soil prompts them to frequent emigration. The most southern part of the county is from sea to sea the property of the Countess of Sutherland. The north west division belongs to Lord Rae and is generally called Lord Rae's county. In this division is the noted headland called Cape Wrath, a coast of perpendicular rock, and the dread of mariners. At some distance from thence eastward is a tract of desolation itself, said to extend 30 miles every way, called Lord Rae's forest, or rather desert, where 700 or 800 deer range at large in a body: a tract of rock or moss covered with long heath, without trees, houses or human beings, and only a few moorfowl. If Sutherland has the most barren territory, it has rich seas and a treble coast, affording access to the fisheries on the west, north and east.

Camden's Britannia 1586

I. SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION

Congestion on the land is recognised as a very serious problem in many rural areas in the tropics, but its existence in temperate latitudes, where it is on a very much smaller scale, is less well known. In Europe there are many peasant communities with greater densities of rural population than the land can support and such congestion may even be found in the remote rural areas of industrialised lands. The congested districts that remain in western Europe are mainly coastal in location and are best seen in parts of Brittany, in the west of Ireland and in the islands of the Outer Hebrides.

Rural depopulation, on the other hand, is the subject of much discussion and concern today. The serious implications of the constant drift towards the towns are causing great alarm in view of the rapid increase in the World's population and the mounting difficulties of producing adequate supplies of foodstuffs and raw materials. In old-established regions of primary production, especially in those of limited resources, the transition from a domestic to a commercial economy must lead to some reduction in the total number of inhabitants that the region can support and unless there is enough industrialisation to support a commercialised community, poverty or emigration must ensue. If the latter alternative results on a large

scale, in time the age structure of the population will be adversely affected and this will introduce its own inherent problems in addition to those dependent on a low density of population. There may also be some depopulated rural areas where geographical factors alone cannot explain the present day conditions and in such areas rehabilitation is likely to be most difficult. The Highlands and Islands of Scotland are the subject of much discussion on depopulation which has reached its most alarming proportions in the north west corner of the mainland. It is by no means confined to the Highlands, however, as it is also seen, for example, in the central plateau of France and in more recently settled areas of many parts of Canada.

Congestion and depopulation are thus both problems of different parts of the Highlands of Scotland, which is not a simple region with a single problem. It contains many contrasted types of country and its rural settlements range from large sporting estates, sheep farms and cattle ranches to general farming districts with small towns and villages, and crofting townships. The crofting districts are coastal in location and are most characteristic of the remoter parts of the West: their situations are usually either insular or peninsular. Crofting communities are found from Cape Wrath to the Firth of Clyde: from the Butt of Lewis to Barra, and also in many parts of the Inner Hebrides.

West Lewis and West Sutherland are crofting districts bordering the Minch. They occupy similar peninsular locations at the northwestern extremities of the mainland of Scotland and of the Outer Hebrides: they have certain basic similarities of physical geography, their early histories were closely intertwined and they both retain the Gaelic tongue. Economically they are both rural areas inhabited mainly by small tenants whose land is held under the crofting system of tenure. The contrasts, however, outweigh the similarities. The population conditions in the two areas are now very different, the settlement pattern is different, the people are dissimilar and neither their cultures nor their modes of life have much in common.

West Lewis is unique in Britain and represents our nearest approach to a classless peasant community. It is exclusively a crofting district with a dense rural population living in numerous large linear townships near the sea. In 1947 this region contained over 6,000 people (average density 37.5 per sq.mile) all of whom were rural subjects living in large and often seriously congested crofting townships. The simple dwellings are close together, the flat land is divided into long narrow strips

ø
1 In 1931 the landward areas of Lewis showed greater densities of population than any other crofting district in Scotland with the exception of the island of Barra.

and the stock is grazed upon the poor communal grazing of the open moor. The people are not primarily interested in agriculture but Lewis is home and the croft is kept going by some members of the family although they cannot be supported by the land alone.

West Sutherland is similar to other parts of the mainland in many ways yet its exceptional remoteness and inaccessibility have made it an extreme case as far as depopulation is concerned. The country is wild, rugged, isolated and very empty but in spite of this its settlement pattern is more diverse than that of Lewis. In 1947 this vast expanse of country contained approximately 2,000 people giving an average density of 3.3 per sq.mile.^ø This scanty population lives mostly in the small coastal crofting townships but in addition there are farms, sporting estates, angling and holiday centres and tiny urban nuclei. As in Lewis, the croft is home and the holdings are small but one crofter often works more than one holding or he rents the grazings of another. The lack of employment, however, has driven many people away from home and depopulation has proceeded to such an extent that it is now difficult to maintain the scanty population that remains.

^ø In 1931 the parish of Durness recorded the lowest population density within the crofting counties.

Congestion in West Lewis, depopulation in West Sutherland: these then are the contrasts which exist between these two rural areas. An attempt will now be made to account for these differences by analysing the past and the present conditions in each.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

II. THE AREAS CONCERNED

(Locations and Land Ownership)

The two areas selected for study constitute the north western extremities of Scotland: of the mainland in North West Sutherland and of the Hebrides in North West Lewis. The exact locations are as follows:

<u>Region</u>	<u>Latitudinal Extent</u>		<u>Longitudinal Extent</u>	
	<u>Degrees</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Degrees</u>	<u>Miles</u>
West Sutherland	58°0'N 58°37'N Cromalt Cape Hills Wrath	44	4°35'W 5°24'W Whiten Point Head of Stoer	30
West Lewis	58°19'N 58°31'N Loch Butt of Carlo: Lewis :way	25	6°12'W 6°51'W Skiger: Loch :sta Carloway	25

West Lewis, although smaller than West Sutherland, has a much denser population and a high degree of uniformity both in its relief features and in its settlement pattern. The region consists of the parish of Barvas and of the Carloway district of the parish of Uig. It extends from the Butt of Lewis to Loch Carloway and has a total area of approximately 160 square miles. The inhabited part, a continuously settled belt between the coast and the interior peat moors, is 25 miles long by 1½ miles wide. Lewis is served by a daily steamer from Kyle of Lochalsh to Stornoway (4½ hours) and by a daily plane from Renfrew via Inverness, which brings Stornoway within 2½ hours of Glasgow. West Lewis is well served by buses from Stornoway and in some respects this region is really less isolated

than the north west mainland.

2,3

Lewis was ceded to the Scottish Crown in 1266, after the defeat of the Norsemen at Largs. In time it became a part of the Earldom of Ross (it remains a part of the county of Ross and Cromarty) and its principal possessors were the Macleods. In the early seventeenth century James VI sent the Fife Adventurers to colonise and settle Lewis. They made numerous attempts to establish themselves within the island but in 1610 they were forced to abandon their efforts and they disposed of their title to Mackenzie of Kintail. This family (Seaforth) ruled with absolute but benevolent power until 1844, when the estate passed into the hands of the Matheson family who held it for over three quarters of a century. In 1918 the late Viscount Leverhulme bought the island and although he expended large sums of money in financing ambitious development schemes these had to be abandoned in 1923 after which the island was divided into small estates and offered for sale. The crofters' holdings were offered to them as individual gifts but the vast majority of the people preferred to remain as tenants under the protection of the Small Landholders (Scotland) Acts. Stornoway, however, was given to the people in trust. Today Lewis consists of several estates, mostly the property of limited companies, and each containing a large number of small holdings. Some land is the

property of the Department of Agriculture and a very little is privately owned.

West Sutherland consists of the parishes of Durness, Eddrachillis and Assynt and extends from Whiten Head and Loch Eriboll in the east and north, along the north coast to Cape Wrath thence southward to the Kirkaig river which separates Sutherland from Ross and Cromarty. The inland boundary is the watershed formed by the mountains associated with the Moine Thrust Plane. These three parishes have a total area approaching 600 square miles and a coastline nearly 150 miles in length. There is, however, a high proportion of uninhabitable mountain land and much water and the few settled areas are small and scattered. West Sutherland is accessible by land only, the route being from Inverness to Lairg or Invershin by rail or road, thence by road to Lochinver (46 miles), Scourie (44 miles), Kinlochbervie (45 miles) or Durness (56 miles). Mail buses serve these villages daily but there are no air services and no steamers.

4 In the early 13th century the military chieftains from Galloway and Moray who were brought into the region to subdue the Norsemen became the progenitors of the Houses of Mackay (Reay country) and Sutherland respectively. For many generations the Reay Estates comprised all the present parishes of Tongue, Durness and Eddrachillis.

Sutherland was formerly the south part of the former Norse domains, i.e. to the south of Catenes or Caithness and Strathnaver formed the northern half of modern Sutherland. Eddrachillis and Assynt were west and southwest of Strathnaver respectively. The present parish boundaries date from 1724 when the former vast parish of Durness was divided into the modern parishes of Durness, Tongue and Eddrachillis. In Assynt fourteen successive lairds bore the name Macleod, probably derived from a younger son of a Macleod of Lewis whose wife was the sole heir to the Assynt lands. In the middle of the seventeenth century the parish passed into the hands of the Seaforths who retained it for about a century, after which it became a part of the Sutherland estates and remained so until 1914.

In 1829 the Reay Estates passed into the hands of the Dukes of Sutherland who were the greatest landed proprietors in the whole of Britain throughout most of the nineteenth century. From the mid nineteenth century onwards the deer forests were extended and in 1871 the

There are several interesting early descriptions of this region which include the notes made by Timothy Pont on his crude maps at the end of the 16th century and the writings of Sir Robert Gordon in 1630. There is also a description in Blaeu's Atlas (1654) and its map of Extima Scotiae shows the relative positions of the various provinces. In 1744 Alexander Bryce published the first good map of the north coast of Scotland which provided detailed information of every coastal feature.

Duke of Westminster acquired the Reay Forest. The remainder of the Reay Forest was taken over by the present Duke in 1919.

During the present century the Sutherland Estates have been greatly diminished in extent. Durness was sold in 1900 but it has since been broken up and resold, some parts of it more than once. At present it consists of Durness village and townships, three large sheep farms and some sporting properties. In Eddrachillis the Scourie district is still a part of the Sutherland Estates, the Reay Forest belongs to the Duke of Westminster and the smaller estates of Ceathrambh Garbh and Kinlochbervie contain most of the crofting districts of the parish. The vast estate of Assynt was resold in 1936 and is now in three parts, Assynt - still an extremely large estate with crofting townships, sheep farms and deerforest land, and Loch Assynt and Inchnadamph which are mainly utilised for grazing and for sport.

III. PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

The physical settings of these two regions show marked similarities in certain respects. Both represent north western extremities of land masses in closely comparable latitudes and both are exposed to Atlantic influences. These climatic conditions favour the development of moorland types of vegetation and the accumulation of peat. In both regions Lewisian Gneiss is the dominant country rock and in both also the surface features were greatly influenced by glacial action. The coasts bear similar witness to marine erosion, to the deposition of blown sand and to the building up of great storm beaches.

In surface relief, however, there are some significant contrasts. West Lewis is a flat or undulating low moorland with numerous shallow lochs and short west flowing streams. Slopes are gentle and the relief monotonous. Most of the land is below 400 ft. and the highest is less than 1,000 ft. (Ben Barvas 918 ft.). West Sutherland, on the other hand, is essentially a highland region. There is little land below 500 ft., the central mountains attain 3,000 ft., steep slopes occur at all altitudes and there is virtually no flat land.

1. STRUCTURE AND SURFACE FEATURES

West Sutherland

8 One outstanding feature of the complicated but now well-known geological history of West Sutherland was the thrusting of great masses of schistose rocks in a W.N.W. direction over the Cambrian, Lewisian and Torridonian formations. The Moine Thrust was the most important of the three major lines of disruption and this plane extends from a point on the north coast, east of Whiten Head southwards to Loch Alsh in Ross and Cromarty. It coincides closely with the main watershed in the north of Scotland. To the east of this watershed the Moine Schists outcrop giving rise to desolate peaty moorlands. The greater part of the parishes of Durness, Assynt and Eddrachillis, however, lie to the west of the Moine Thrust plane and they contain three major groups of rocks, viz. (a) the Cambrian and other rocks of the belt of complication, (b) Lewisian
9 Gneiss, which constitutes most of the unmoved foreland further west, and (c) considerable outcrops of Torridon Sandstone.

The belt of complication, including the great thrusts and the Cambrian rocks, is a wild and mountainous stretch of country with west facing escarpments. The Cambrian limestones outcrop extensively in Durness and Assynt giving good agricultural land. They also give rise to certain karst-like features including caves and swallow holes at

Smoo (Durness), underground rivers (Traligill, Inchnadamph) and solution lakes, e.g. Lakes Croispol and Borralie (Durness). The basal Cambrian quartzite is an exceedingly resistant formation and when capping the Lewisian Gneiss forms steep-sided mountains encircled by snow-like screes (e.g. Arkle and Foinaven). Lewisian Gneiss, the oldest formation in Great Britain, is a resistant crystalline metamorphic rock which outcrops extensively in West Sutherland giving a low broken plateau. It is intruded by ancient igneous rocks in Assynt and Eddrachillis giving a more irregular surface than is found in Durness. The Torridon Sandstone gives different landforms in different parts. The Parph in Durness is an extensive high moorland of deep peat hags, the Torridon outcrops of Oldshore and Rhu Stoer are lower in altitude and support crofting communities while the relict mountains of Assynt - Suilven, Canisp and Quinag are fashioned from great thicknesses of Torridon Sandstone resting unconformably on Lewisian rocks. The thrust planes, the igneous outcrops, the shear zones of the foreland and the numerous faults everywhere accentuate the irregularities of relief and complicate the drainage pattern.

9 The whole of West Sutherland shows abundant evidence of glaciation. During the later period of the glacial history of the region confluent glaciers radiated

from Ben More, Assynt and the Reay Forest. Overdeepening of the main valleys and the formation of hanging valleys can be traced to this period which was followed by erosion
 10 by valley and corrie glaciers. Thus the features of glacial erosion can be identified at all altitudes, there are lateral and sometimes terminal moraines in the main valleys while pockets of drift, spreads of boulder clay and mounds of moraine material are found throughout.

Large areas in West Sutherland are completely devoid of natural vegetation: elsewhere moorland grasses, heather, some bracken and a few trees are found, while peat covers much of the surface in the form of peat hag or blanket bog and it accumulates in every hollow. The best grasslands are the true downland pastures which occur on the Durness Limestone at Keoldale, and the Machairs where dunes have been fixed by grasses. Both give reasonably good arable land. Trees are infrequent generally but parts of Assynt, as around Lochinver and Loch Assynt, are well-wooded, and Eddrachillis has a few small woods. In Durness, however, trees are few and far between. The deciduous woodlands contain birch, alder, willow, hazel and some oak. In the remnants of the coniferous forests pines are dominant but in plantations as around Hope, Lochinver, Scourie and Loch More, larches, spruces and firs are favoured.

The remoteness of this region is reflected in the

richness of its fauna, and in the rarity of its flora.

13,14 In the caves along the Allt nan Uamb near Inchnadamph some exceedingly interesting animal remains were discovered during recent excavations. The birds include all kinds of sea birds and common land birds, eagles, buzzards, ptarmigans, ravens, herons, hooded crows and corncrakes. Many kinds of salt water, fresh water and shell fish are found, including salmon, trout, haddock, herring and lobsters. Among land animals the deer have been famed for centuries, wolves were once a great menace here and wild cats may still be seen. The rarest land plant, among a wealth of moorland and grassland vegetation, is *Primula Scotica*, found along the cliffs of the north coast - its only locality in Britain.

West Lewis

15 The peat-covered moorland of West Lewis is developed on drift-covered Lewisian Gneiss. The prevalent rocks are gneisses. Biotite gneisses appear at Ness and a granitic gneiss, reddish in colour, outcrops at Dalebeg. Bare rock is seen only at the coast and in the south; elsewhere it is overlain by glacial drift, usually a bluish boulder clay or as in Ness a shelly type of clay which drains relatively easily and provides the best arable land in Lewis. The drift is covered by a thick layer of peat except where it has been "skinned" for fuel or where blown sand has accumulated. The main result

of glaciation from the mainland was the covering of the parent rock with an irregular deposit of glacial drift whose hollows contain the numerous lochs of the interior.

The Barvas river is the largest of the small west flowing rivers which descend from the moors in shallow valleys and flow into small exposed bays. Most of the rivers south of Barvas flow into large lochs now cut off from the sea by huge storm beaches of gigantic pebbles. The coastline proper with its storm beaches, its sand dunes and machairs at Barvas and Ness and its cliffs elsewhere provides the only scenery of interest. There is no harbour between the Butt of Lewis and Carloway, and Port of Ness and Skigersta to the east of the Butt are very small, exposed and blocked with sand.

16 Soils in West Lewis are derived from peat, boulder clay, or sand, or from admixtures of the same. The best soils are found on the shelly boulder clay of Ness and on the sandy machairs. All the crofting townships are situated between the coast and the open moor, and the linear crofts thus have a variety of types of soil. The arable land has either a light sandy soil, frequently calcareous, or a loamy soil of moorland type derived chiefly from the boulder clay covered "skinned land". The peat varies from a few inches to over 15 ft. in depth and in consistency from soft wet bog to dry firm peat. The surface peat is often brown, fibrous and undecomposed but the deep peat is dense and black and provides an

abundance of excellent fuel.

11 The natural vegetation of Lewis is dominated by the
fact that peat once covered the entire surface except for
the narrow fringes of sandy land along the sea shore, the
surface of the lochs and the bare rocks and steep slopes
of the hills. With the exception of the machair all land
which is now utilised by man has been reclaimed from peat
but even on the peat there are important differences in
17 the plant associations. Hardy and Geddes enumerated six
main types of vegetation in Lewis which range from the
summits of the hills downwards to sea level as follows:
a) Rocky pastures, b) Fair hill pastures, c) Marshy grass
moors, d) Peat moors, e) Heather moors, f) Sandy pastures
and dunes.

In West Lewis rocky pastures are not represented,
fair hill pastures are best seen in the low hills between
Shawbost and Carloway, and marshy grass moors are well
developed on the slopes of Ben Barvas. Peat moors are
widespread throughout the island and may be broken into
peat hags in places. True heather moors are not widespread
in West Lewis and the sandy pastures and dunes are confined
to the rich machairs of Barvas and North West Ness.
Although the peat provides evidence of former tree growth
not a single tree is to be found in West Lewis today.

2. CLIMATE

West Sutherland has an essentially oceanic climate exhibiting characteristics typical of an area exposed to the full force of Atlantic influences and at the same time backed by land of high relief. In this large region numerous local climates develop and considerations of height, slope, shelter, and aspect are often more important than a knowledge of average temperatures and rainfall.

The prevailing wind is from the south west: gales and strong winds are frequent and the west facing slopes of the hills receive a very heavy precipitation. Wind direction, wind force and amounts of precipitation are very variable from part to part and the inland areas experience much more rain, less wind and greater temperature extremes than the coastal districts. Rain falls throughout the year with a typically oceanic regime, i.e. an autumn and winter maximum and a minimum in spring. Atmospheric humidity is always high as is the number of rain days throughout the year. The northerly latitude and the corresponding length of day in summer time helps to compensate for the cool temperatures and for the low sunshine average. Thus although winter temperatures are mild and frost and snow infrequent at sea level, nevertheless heavy rainfall, strong winds, cool summers and lack of sunshine make the climate here both enervating and unpleasant. It is, in fact, one of the

greatest drawbacks to the region being especially detrimental to agricultural and horticultural pursuits.

In West Lewis the uniform relief gives uniformity of climate. As in Sutherland, the outstanding features are the small annual range of temperature, the mild winters and cool summers, the high humidity, strong winds and the absence of prolonged periods of frost and snow. The lower altitude, however, results in a generally lower precipitation and a slightly higher sunshine average. The Atlantic exposure and the lack of shelter gives a high frequency of gales which is the worst feature of the climate. The Butt of Lewis records more gales than
18 any other meteorological station in Great Britain. Animals suffer as well as arable and garden crops and if shelter belts could be induced to grow they would prove of inestimable benefit to stock. In late summer, however, a strong wind may help to dry ripening grain.

The accompanying statistics show the average climatic conditions in both regions and the contrasts between the coastal and inland areas of Sutherland.

B. HISTORICAL SURVEY

IV. FACTORS LEADING TO THE CONTRASTS IN POPULATION CONDITIONS BEFORE 1886

1. THE CROFTING ECONOMY IN THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

19 The modern history of the Highlands dates from the abolition of heritable jurisdictions following the Forty-Five. This destruction of the military bond between the chief and his clansmen led eventually to the breaking up of the clan system and to its substitution by the crofting system whereby each former subtenant, who had held his land jointly from a tacksman, became a direct tenant of the landlord with his own area of arable land. Small tenants or crofters, however, had no leases and no security of tenure.

20 Under the clan system the land was worked primarily for subsistence purposes with the raising of cattle as the sole source of cash income. The holdings comprised (a) the infield, a portion of land near the dwelling which was in permanent cultivation, (b) the outfield, which was cropped intermittently, (c) a share in the hill grazing and (d) summer pastures or shielings. Most of the land was held in runrig whereby a group of tenants made themselves responsible for the rent of an area of arable land which was parcelled out in strips and reallocated annually. Agricultural practices were uneconomic: the infield only was manured regularly, soils soon became exhausted, cultivation was by primitive plough or caschrom and yields

The change from a military to a financial relationship fell as a heavy burden on the tacksmen who had previously held large areas of land at a nominal rent, in return for military service. Hitherto the tacksmen had had little interest in agriculture but after their rents were increased they were driven to attempt to raise more money from the land. This was hard to accomplish where a primitive subsistence economy prevailed, as small tenants were unable to pay increased rents and this led to the first large scale emigration from the Highlands in the mid eighteenth century. Between 1763 and 1775, 10,000 people left the Highlands for North America but this emigration was very different from that which followed the clearances. Towards the end of the eighteenth century large scale specialised sheep farming was introduced into Scotland which soon proved a more profitable source of income to the Highland landlord and tacksman than the let of their lands to small tenants. After 1755 the introduction of sheep farming became the main cause of emigration from the mainland areas of the Highland region. In some cases the people were forcibly and ruthlessly evicted and those who did not emigrate either went to the Lowlands or were settled in poor, isolated coastal towns: ships which soon became seriously congested. Conditions were worst in Sutherland and the events of these times caused such bitterness among the inhabitants that they

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have never been forgotten. In the Western Isles the introduction of sheep farming was on a much larger scale in the Inner Hebrides than in the Outer Isles. In the former area the people were often driven out of the district altogether, in the latter case sheep farming had little effect upon the distribution or density of the population but there was acute congestion on the land nevertheless, due to the failure of the kelp industry.

19 From 1745 until 1845 the population of the Highlands and especially of the Islands increased at an enormous rate. The distress and overpopulation which resulted were caused by many factors which included the failure of the kelp industry in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the failure of the herring industry, and unemployment due to the cessation of road, bridge, and canal building. The death rate had been reduced by the reduction of the infant mortality rate, by the inoculation against smallpox and by the cessation of private wars. Another factor which contributed to the high density of the population was the over dependence on the potato which had been introduced into the Hebrides in 1743. By 1820 the depression in the kelp trade had caused a shortage of money in many places and the congestion on the land which resulted, due to the subdivision of holdings for landless cottars, became acute. In the 1840s a general failure of the potato crop brought the living standards of the people to a

dangerously low ebb and there was widespread distress.

22 In 1840, as a result of the exploitation of many emigrants by unscrupulous agents, the Government established a Colonial Land and Emigration Department to advise, control and administer emigration enterprises. The majority of Highlanders emigrating to Canada preferred to settle in Cape Breton or Prince Edward Island as their earlier compatriots had done and it was often difficult to persuade them to move to new but more fertile areas in Upper Canada.

Economic conditions in the Highlands generally deteriorated steadily from 1820 until 1850 but the population continued to increase until it attained its maximum of 396,000 in 1841. In 1845 the Poor Law (Scotland) Act was passed in order to alleviate distress. It provided for the erection of poorhouses and for the provision of medical attention. Under this act the Board of Supervision was set up whose extensive enquiry into the condition of 23 the people of the Highlands and Islands in 1851 showed that there was overpopulation, poverty and even destitution in many of the crofting districts. In some areas the existence of deer forests was an additional factor in depriving crofters of agricultural land. Emigration was suggested as the only feasible solution in extreme cases.

Between 1851 and 1883 conditions in the crofting areas continued to deteriorate especially with regard to congestion on the land and by 1883 it was apparent that

if serious trouble were to be averted the situation would require thorough investigation. The Crofters' Commission was accordingly appointed in that year to enquire into the condition of the crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Many witnesses were examined throughout the region, meetings were called in Edinburgh and Glasgow and in 1884 the Napier Report, accompanied by 24 four large volumes of Minutes of Evidence was published. This report contained important suggestions under the headings of:- land, fisheries and communications, education, justice, deer forests and game, and education.

The chief complaint was the shortage of land for smallholders. The Commissioners suggested that the township (with a minimum of three holdings) should be a recognised agricultural unit possessing common pasture rights but having individual areas of arable land. Improved leases and compensations for improvements were suggested but security of tenure was not advocated. It was also suggested that the Government should be empowered to acquire land for distribution to crofters and that holdings of less than £20 should not be subdivided and holdings of less than £10 should not be constituted. The Commissioners agreed unanimously that fishing could be greatly encouraged and that the need for the provision of piers and the improvement of harbours and steamer services was urgent. It was pointed out that although education had improved

enormously since the passing of the Education (Scotland) Act 1872, nevertheless in the poorest areas, such as Barvas Lewis, the school rates were often excessive, the compulsory clause was virtually inoperative and attendances seldom qualified for the Government grant. It was suggested that some deer forests should be restocked with sheep and cattle and that others, where suitable, should be given over for crofter occupation. Rentals were examined and suggestions made for suitably sized holdings in certain areas. Emigration was advocated, especially for the Northern Hebrides and possibly for Sutherland also.

Several members of the Commission submitted individual memoranda. Some objected to the township suggestion and deprecated communal practices as retrogressive, others put forward a strong plea for the establishment of club farms as a compromise for the difficulties of establishing small farms instead of small holdings. As a result of this report the Crofters Act was passed in 1886 which is still the most important Act ever passed concerning the tenure of land in the crofting districts.

2. CONDITIONS IN WEST LEWIS BEFORE 1886

The establishment of the crofting system brought no revolutionary changes in the lives of the people of Lewis during the eighteenth century. The proprietors, the Seaforth family, whose means were not unlimited, assisted their tenants as much as they could by, for example, erecting spinning schools and, when necessary, providing charity for the poor. A few sheep farms were established but there were no large scale clearances as on the mainland. By the end of the century, Lewis was still inhabited by a race of hardy people who lived simple, primitive and isolated lives in rural communities. Subsistence agriculture alone could not support them and they depended also on fishing and on industries such as kelp manufacture, spinning and weaving and the making of coarse pottery.

The condition of agriculture in Lewis at the beginning of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly very primitive. The infield and outfield communal method of cultivation was gradually being replaced by the establishment of individual holdings or crofts but the arable land remained unfenced and the hill grazing continued to be used in common. The descriptions of West Lewis contained in the Old Statistical Account for Scotland and in the reports of Walker (1808) and Macdonald (1811) agree that virtually no progress had been made in agriculture since the island was visited by Dean Monro in 1594. In his report to the Board

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of Agriculture in 1811, James Macdonald described Lewis as
"incomparably the most backward in agriculture and in the
 general state of the inhabitants of all the Western Isles."

The only improvements that had been made were the introduction of potatoes and the portioning out of a few of the tenants' lands into individual holdings: elsewhere the arable land was still held in runrig. There were no other improvements and the condition of the people had deteriorated with the rapid increase in population. The island was self-sufficient in grain in spite of serious mismanagement and the illicit distillation of whisky. The main crops grown were oats and barley, flax and potatoes. The land was cultivated by spade, by caschrom or by the use of small ploughs drawn by as many as four horses. Cattle, sheep and horses were all small and of poor quality. The manures used were dung and seaweed, and thatch from the roofs of the houses.

Macdonald's description of the living conditions of the people was expressed in strong terms:-

"Dwelling houses, dress, food and general accommodation
 "are the most wretched imaginable throughout the whole
 "range of the country district. So vile indeed are the
 "dwellings in general that we cannot enter upon a
 "description of them. Suffice it to observe that the
 "houses are cleaned out only once a year, for the purpose
 "of manuring the land with what polluted contents the

"most Hottentot economy had collected in them during the whole season. In short it would be disgusting to mention in detail the domestic and agricultural barbarism of those poor people, who seem to have made no advances in civilisation or comfort since the reign of Queen Mary."

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Fishing had been introduced into Lewis in the seventeenth century when Lord Seaforth brought a number of Dutch fishermen to Stornoway. By the end of the eighteenth century white fishing was general all round Lewis and each township had its quota of boats. In West Lewis Barvas and Ness concentrated on dog fish from which oil was extracted for sale in Stornoway. In the latter part of the eighteenth century herring fishing developed greatly in Lewis with Loch Roag as the main fishing ground, and in connection with this industry net making, using home grown hemp, provided considerable employment locally. Deep sea herring fishing, however, could not develop very far until better boats and gear were available and this did not take place until late in the nineteenth century. The west coast of Lewis lagged far behind the east and, although many local men were employed in herring fishing, it was often as members of mainland crews, thus a large share of the profits left the island. White fishing, on the other hand, was carried on almost entirely from local boats, and shell

fish also contributed greatly to the value of the fishing industry in Lewis. The importance of the fishing industry in Barvas at the end of the eighteenth century can be seen from the fact that out of a total population of 2006 in
 26 in 1797, there were 340 fishermen from the 439 families.

30 Kelp manufacture was less important in Lewis than in the southern islands of the Hebrides, and in Lewis the parish of Barvas produced the smallest quantity of this product. It was the decline of the kelp industry after 1820 that first sent people to the fishing in the east of Scotland and although Lewis suffered less in this respect than the other Hebridean islands, it too was adversely affected.

Unlike kelp manufacture the textile industries of the islands were true home and hand industries. With female instead of male labour, they gave ideally suitable employment for the otherwise idle winter months and they satisfied the domestic requirements with a small surplus available for export. Woollen textile industries were not
 30 however, developed in Lewis on a commercial scale until the middle of the 19th century, when Lady Dunmore did much to improve the process of the production of woollen cloth. The beginnings of the Harris tweed industry really date from her efforts in this sphere. Flax spinning was never
 26 developed on any scale in the Long Island although

Mrs. Mackenzie had established two spinning schools at Barvas at the end of the 18th century.

32 The conditions in West Lewis in the early 1840s,
 33 as described by the parish ministers for the new Statistical
 Account, show few changes or improvements since the
 beginning of the century. The ministers stressed the
 problems attendant on the great increase in the population
 which, as they explained, the land alone was quite unable
to support. This decade, however, brought great changes
 to the island. In 1843 the Disruption occurred and this
 was of great importance in Lewis since most of the
 parishioners joined the Free Church. This Church made
 noble efforts to improve education but unfortunately its
 labours were little appreciated and the schools which were
 established were very poorly attended. In 1844 a major
 31 event occurred in Lewis when the island was bought by
 Sir James Matheson for the sum of £190,000 i.e. at 9/4
 per acre. The annual rent at that time amounted to
 £10,681 (including salmon fishings and shootings) which
 was contributed by 2,100 tenants as follows:-

Paying under £1 per annum	123
" between £1 - £2:10/- p.a.	515
" " £2:10/- - £5 p.a.	1,299
" " £5 - £10 p.a.	129
" " £10 - £30 "	18
" " £30 - £100 "	21
" " £100 - £250 "	4
" " £250 - £600 "	1
	<hr/> 2,110 <hr/>

It has been noted above that the condition of the people had been deteriorating steadily since the early part of the century. Their numbers had increased rapidly, agricultural land had become seriously congested and impoverished and subsidiary sources of employment had declined. Soon after the estate changed hands the islanders were in a state of extreme poverty and destitution brought about by the potato famine of 1846 and onwards.

Sir James Matheson expended vast sums of money in Lewis, particularly between 1846 and 1850, in attempts to provide employment and to improve the conditions of the people. Between 1849 and 1851 all the crofts were surveyed, re-allocated and revalued: the last vestiges of the true runrig system were virtually abolished and the tenants obtained individual croft holdings. As early as 1850, however, there were 800 landless cottars in Lewis and as the land alone obviously could not support all the people it was essential for some to go to the east coast fishing, for some to emigrate, and for some to seek employment further south.

The extent of the Matheson Estate in 1851 and the rental of it are shown below:-

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Matheson Estate 1851 (almost all Lewis)

Land under crofters	258,958	acres
" " farms	65,969	"
" " deer forests plus Crimersta	75,105	"
Town lands, glebes, schools etc.	<u>4,148</u>	"
	404,180	"

Most of the farmed land in Lewis was in Stornoway parish and most of the sporting land in the hillier southern part of the island. In West Lewis the majority of land was occupied by small tenants with an ever-increasing number of cottars and squatters. The table
 23 below shows that total rents in Lewis had been increased since 1844 but at the same time Sir James spent vast sums of money on improvement schemes and on emigration projects.

<u>Number of Rate- payers</u>	<u>Rents assessed on</u>	<u>Aggregate amount of rent</u>
642	Under £5	£1,996: 0: 0
97	£5 - £10	587: 2: 7
65	£10 - £20	802: 6: 5
29	£20 - £30	654: 2: 2
20	£30 - £40	671:15: 0
9	£40 - £50	385:10: 0
23	£50 - £100	1,879: 7: 8
6	£100 - £200	839:11: 0
—	Sir James' lands and house property	4,582: 6: 4
891		—
—		£12,378: 1: 2

The improvements which Sir James Matheson financed included road and bridge building, fencing, land reclamation, agricultural improvements and the establishment of weekly sea communication with Glasgow. In addition he set up brick works, fish curing houses and a chemical works to make paraffin oil from peat; he financed industrial and other schools, he assisted emigration, he employed as much local labour as he could for estate work and on his farms and shooting lodges, and when necessary he provided money

for the poor in the form of charity.

His expenditure was as follows:-

Castle buildings, grounds and policies ...	£110,495
Buildings and land reclamation	99,720
Roads and bridges	25,590
Brickworks	6,000
Patent slip	6,000
Bulls for improvement of crofters' stock ...	1,200
Fish curing houses	1,000
Quay for steamers at Stornoway	2,225
Chemical works for paraffin oil from peat ..	33,000
Shooting lodges	19,300
Gas Company	350
Water Company	1,150
Meal, seed potatoes etc	33,000

£ 339,030

For many years Sir James had the mail contract between Ullapool and Stornoway and he did much to improve the island's communications both with the mainland and internally.

In spite of all Sir James' assistance little material progress or improvement resulted: Sir James himself referred to the helplessness of the people, to their inability to earn a livelihood and to their refusal to "labour with pick or spade." For many of his improvement schemes Sir James had to import labourers from elsewhere yet many of his tenants, who had large families, were in arrears of rent and were living on tiny plots of ill-managed land. At the same time they refused to surrender their lands and were reluctant to emigrate. Between 1844 and 1850 Sir James financed the exodus of 2,331 people from Lewis but the prospect of permanent emigration did not appeal to many.

23 (Appendix). The evidence of witnesses (quoted in the appendix of the McNeill Report (1851)) shows clearly that the Lewis people had taken advantage of the generosity of the proprietor and that the distribution of charity had demoralised them to the extent that they would not accept work even when it was offered to them. The McNeill Report also advocated emigration as an essential solution to the problems of Lewis.

After a time it was found impossible to continue improvements on the crofters' lands at the great expense of the initial schemes since arrears of rent were not always paid off and interest due was often late. The improvements on the farms gave a better return in every way and were thus continued for a longer time.

As the nineteenth century progressed so the population problems of Lewis increased for, in spite of poverty and unemployment, the majority of the inhabitants preferred to remain within their own island instead of emigrating or seeking employment elsewhere. Thus land congestion became a critical issue and by 1881 there were 2,790 crofts, as well as 36 farms, in Lewis as compared with a total of 2,100 holdings in 1844. It is true that within this period some of the sheep farms which had been established by the Seaforths were cleared for deer forests but this had only a limited effect upon West Lewis. However, this practice was bitterly resented throughout the island and the crofters' protests led to a series of enquiries

which lasted from 1872 to 1893. These enquiries established that there had been much highly undesirable subdivision of holdings that were already too small and it was pointed out 34 that there had been no increases in rent for over twenty years, the average in 1880 being only £2:18/- per holding, yielding a total rental from all crofts of £8,104: 5: 7d. In spite of their small size more than one family was living on many of the holdings. The cattle and sheep were of inferior quality, the former usually of the Highland breed, the latter being nondescript black-faced animals. The scarcity of pasture and of feeding-stuffs in winter made it possible to keep many more cattle in summer than in winter, and for this purpose the shielings were still widely used. In general the stock was badly managed, the common grazing lands were overstocked and breeding was carried on in a very hap-hazard fashion. Methods of cultivation and of manuring were primitive and the crops of oats, bere and potatoes were seldom grown in proper rotation. Two areas of good soil existed in West Lewis, viz. Ness, a densely settled area, producing especially good crops of barley, and Barvas which had an extensive machair used for cultivation and for grazing.

The thirty-six farms in Lewis brought in an annual rent of £4,878:11:10d. in 1880. They were mostly devoted to the rearing of sheep (Cheviots, Black-faced and crosses)

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and cattle (Highland). In Stornoway parish, however, general systematic agriculture was practised. Crops of oats, turnips, hay and pasture were grown in rotations of from five to seven years; sheep were kept and also Ayrshire cattle. About 1,500 cattle were sent away from Lewis annually and about 200 were slaughtered in Stornoway. The prices obtained were as follows:-

Farmers' stock - from £6:10/- per head
 Crofters' " " £2:10:0d. - £6:10/- per head
 Old cows from £3 - £5 per head.

The Lewis farmers were more interested in sheep than in cattle and the principal sheep farms were Park, Lynshader and Galson (Barvas parish). On such well managed sheep farms, lambs and cast ewes were sold annually. The rents ranged from 9d. per acre for the grazings and heather hills, 3/6d per head for tacksmen's sheep (Cheviot and cross breeds) on improved grazing land, and 1/3d. per head from crofters' small black faced sheep on the same grazing. Arable land cost between 5/- and 15/- per acre, according to quality.

Stock: Barvas Parish 1881 & 1882

	<u>Crofters 1881</u>	<u>Crofters 1882</u>	<u>Farms 1881</u>	<u>Farms 1882</u>
Horses	549	580	4	6
Cattle	3,591	3,421	47	71
Sheep	14,238	13,795	1,716	1,643
Pigs	300	285	4	2

These figures show that, without doubt, the crofters' lands were very crowded and that little extra land was available for them within the limits of their own parish. Galson farm was the only area remaining which could be taken over for crofters' holdings.

24 In 1883, when the Napier commissioners visited Lewis, the evidence provided showed that the whole island was "seething in a chronic state of discontent". The acute congestion and serious overcrowding must have been largely of the islanders' own making for they had constantly sub-divided their holdings in defiance of estate regulations. In some parts of Lewis smallholders had earlier been removed to make room for sheep farms and deer forests but this only affected West Lewis to the extent that a few evicted tenants had been settled in their townships. The general complaints of the Lewis crofters were similar to those from crofters elsewhere. Their main grievances were:-

- (1) The eviction of people in South Lewis for deer forests.
- (2) The shifting of townships and of individuals with no compensation for improvements.
- (3) Poor land, small lots and over-crowding.
- (4) Excessive rents.
- (5) No security of tenure.
- (6) No redress of grievances.

It was pointed out by some witnesses that there was very little evidence of the former prosperity said to have existed on the individual lots of land, that the land was undoubtedly badly managed and that agricultural methods were very primitive. The Rev. Strachan, Barvas, said that the crofters had not reaped the full benefit designed for them by the proprietor. For example, in 1872, the Barvas crofters had been made to erect better dwelling houses and were assisted by the proprietor to do so; before long the houses had returned to their original primitive and insanitary condition. Leases had been made available in 1879 but very few had troubled to secure them. In 1883 Lewis contained 2,948 crofters and at least 804 cottars or subtenants. A great many Lewis holdings consisted of approximately 5 acres of arable land and a share in the common grazings on which it was possible to keep 3 cows and followers, 1 horse and from 20 to 30 sheep. Such a holding might just support one family but in many cases two or three households were living on it. Its rent was about £3 plus 16/- for rates and road money. The Chamberlain of the Lewis Estate pointed out that rents in Lewis were lower than anywhere else in Scotland: and that very few increases had been made within recent years. In his view a reasonable holding would require to consist of 6 - 10 acres of arable land with 400 - 700 acres of pasture: in this case the entire island could not satisfy the wants:

of its inhabitants. Other witnesses entirely disagreed with these views: they suggested that the deterioration of conditions in Lewis was no fault of the islands and that there was ample land available for lots of from £5 - £7 rent.

In its report the Napier Commission suggested that from 6 to 10 acres of arable land were desirable per holding (agreeing with the views of the Chamberlain of Lewis) and that each should support 6 to 10 head of cattle and 40 to 50 sheep.

Lewis 1883

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Rental</u>		<u>Acreage</u>	
		<u>Parish Per Head</u>		<u>Parish Per Head</u>	
Barvas	5,325	£3,215	12/1	89,654	16.8
Stornoway	10,389	£14,490	27/11	67,652	6.5
Lochs	6,284	£4,159	13/3	144,444	23
Uig	3,489	£5,071	29/1	135,471	38.9
Lewis	25,487	£26,937		437,221	

Holdings and Rentals: Barvas Parish 1883

<u>Holders</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Total Rent</u>	<u>Rent per Acre</u>
Crofters 812	6654	£2,330: 4: 6	7½d.
Cottars 87			for arable and hill pasture
Dell Mill Lands	160	£88	
Galson Tack	7290	315: 9: 6	10½d.
Glebes etc.	940		

3. CONDITIONS IN WEST SUTHERLAND BEFORE 1886

As West Sutherland is one of the remotest parts of the mainland of Scotland, it is not surprising that it was the last to receive the benefits of the more settled
 4 conditions which came to the Highlands following the rising of 1745. Even in the early nineteenth century when developments were proceeding in the south east of the county, the north west coast remained virtually unknown and very inaccessible, being effectively isolated by the high mountains of the Reay Forest and by the numerous lochs and bogs which it contains.

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The descriptions of West Sutherland in the Old Statistical Account for Scotland were written between 1792 and 1795 thus they provide a valuable and interesting record of pre-Clearance days and, in the case of Durness and Eddrachillis, before they passed from the hands of the Reay family to become a part of the Sutherland estates in 1829. In those days the people were far more dependent on the sea than they are today. All transport was by sea as not one proper road or bridge existed throughout this large region. A few people only were employed on the kelp shores but all were engaged in fishing both for domestic use and for export. Small fishing stations existed at Rispond, (Durness), at Culag, (Lochinver), at Culkein-Drumbeg and on some of the sea lochs. Salmon were fished commercially on the Hope,

Dionard, Laxford, Inchard and Inver rivers. Black cattle had for long been the main source of income to the farmers but as the price obtained for them was falling, many of the tacksmen were favouring sheep instead, for which much of their land was eminently suited. Much of the interior was under deer forest as it had always been. Isolation was the main drawback to the inhabitants for apart from the great distance from the nearest towns, (Dingwall and Inverness are over 100 miles away) there was a complete lack of communications, no regular postal facilities, no medical services, insufficient schools and inconveniently situated places of worship. Although the people lived in simple thatched houses there is no indication from these accounts that their standard of living was very different from that of similarly placed rural inhabitants in other parts of Scotland.

38 The condition of the county in 1812 was described fully by Henderson when writing for the Board of Agriculture. At that time arable land was let by the boll sowing (1 boll of bere seed sowed approximately 1 acre) and the rent of pasture land was calculated by the number of cattle it would maintain during the summer months. The arable land was often let in small lots of 1 - 30 acres or boll sowings, each proprietor having a proportion of intown pasture with the upland grazings pastured in common,

the two often being separated by a head dyke. The cattle were mostly poor quality black cattle which later were replaced by the West Highland breed. The original Kerry sheep and large flocks of goats, for which Sutherland was once famous, were killed off by rot and scab disease in 1806. Cultivation was very simple, especially in Durness and Eddrachillis, where the caschrom was still widely used. Crop management was usually poor and yields were low. The main manures used were dung and seaweed: limestone was available in Assynt and Durness, also shell marl from Loch Borrallie in the latter place. The houses of the wealthy farmers were good and comfortable but the small tenants lived at bare subsistence level in very simple dwellings.

21 In 1806 Cheviot sheep were introduced into Sutherland from Northumberland and by 1825 large scale sheep farming had spread throughout the county. The Highland Clearances which began in Sutherland in 1807 were undoubtedly carried out in that county with the greatest severity; consequently they have acquired great publicity and much notoriety. Few writers place the full responsibility on either the landlords or the sheep farmers; most blame is laid on the factors of the estates. Patrick Sellar, then under factor, was held responsible for the worst outrages in connection with these clearances and in 1816 was tried in Inverness on a charge of culpable homicide and fire raising. He was acquitted but was nevertheless removed from office.

40 James Loch was appointed factor soon after this and he has described the work in "The Sutherland Improvements" published in 1820.

The northwest appears to have suffered less than the southeast. It was cleared nevertheless, the effects being less obviously apparent as it never supported more than a very sparse population and it already possessed ancient and extensive deer forests. Assynt was the first part of the northwest of Sutherland to be cleared. The people were removed from all the upland parts except Elphin and Knockan and those who did not emigrate were settled on the coast mainly between Lochinver and Rhu Stoer. In 1811 Lochinver was planned as a definite village centre for the region and developed as a fishing station. All the removals on the Sutherland estate were completed by 1820, by which time the runrig system had been virtually abolished so that all tenants now held their lands directly from the landlord. The sheep farmers alone had definite leases, usually for 19 years, while the smallholders were annual tenants at will which gave them no security and no incentive to make improvements.

Similar changes and clearances were made on the Reay Estates. The interior was converted into seven great sheep farms and the people were removed to the coasts at Scourie and near to the mouths of Lochs Inchard and Eriboll. Each tenant was given two Scotch acres of arable land with

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additional hill pasture. In Eddrachillis the Kinloch:
 :bervie coastal district became seriously congested with
 people from Kinsale, Skerrieha, Handa and Sandwood. In
 Durness a similar situation developed. Very large sheep
 farms were established at Eriboll, Keoldale and Balnakiel
 and the crofters were crowded into exposed cliff top settle:
 :ments except for those who were settled as crofter fisher:
 :men at Rispond where a fishing station had been established.

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In 1829 the Reay country was purchased by the Duke
 of Sutherland which made the Sutherland estates the biggest
 in the country. A few more areas were cleared after this,
 for example Handa Island which was made a part of the
 factor's farm in 1848. The potato famine of 1846 brought
 widespread distress in the congested coastal areas. The
 Duke of Sutherland insisted on financing relief measures
 himself and spent vast sums on building roads and bridges,
 in providing postal and educational facilities, in assisting
 home industries, and in building inns and farm houses.
 Also he contributed £7,000 to assist emigration: five ships
 from Liverpool called at Loch Laxford to embark passengers
 for Canada who settled mainly in Cape Breton Island and on
 the mainland of Nova Scotia.

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The accounts of the West Sutherland parishes in the
 New Statistical Account for Scotland describe the major
 changes which resulted from the introduction of large scale

sheep farming and from the change in land ownership in 1829. The Duke of Sutherland undoubtedly effected great improvements but the introduction of sheep farming caused a redistribution of the population which was revolutionary. The people of the crowded coastal settlements turned to the fishing industry in all its branches and in spite of many difficulties they achieved considerable success at certain ports. Rispond, for example, had several sloops which sometimes traded direct with Hamburg. The change over in the pastoral economy can be seen from the case of Eddrachillis where the number of sheep increased from 2,629 in 1792 to 12,900 in 1839. The rental for the parish increased from £230 to £2,492 between the same years.

By the middle of the century the great sheep farms were firmly established, flourishing concerns and from this time onwards the population of the area has declined continuously. Although fishing was being developed on all the coasts, the clearing of the interior for sheep walks deprived the original inhabitants of the opportunity of making a good living at home and many sought seasonal employment at the east coast fishing or in labouring work further south. As time went on, the gap between the wealthy farmers and the small tenants widened. The former lived in fine large houses, the latter often in black houses where they had to exist at a wretchedly low subsistence level.

The sheep farms of Sutherland included the largest in Great Britain: most of them were of at least 30,000 acres in extent and were worked in hirsels, each hirsle usually being the charge of one shepherd. The rents were fixed at so much per head of the winter sheep carrying capacity: thus rents were really proportional to the amount of arable land included within the total acreage.

Sheep Farms 1880

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Farm</u>	<u>Rental</u>
46 Durness & Tongue	Melness (70,000 acres)	£1,257
Durness	Eriboll (30,000 acres)	£1,307
Durness	Balnakiel	£1,385
Durness	Keoldale	£1,200
Eddrachillis	Glendhu	£1,395
Assynt	Drumwordlain	£1,000
Assynt	Achumore	£ 893

Sutherland was essentially a breeding and a rearing county, hence its sheep farms were purely pastoral carrying ewe and wether flocks which were mostly self-sustaining. Each year cast ewes and three year old wethers were sold to buyers: the former found markets for breeding in lowland farms, the latter were sent to be fattened in preparation for the butcher. Almost the entire sheep stock was of the Cheviot breed. The turning point in the prosperity of sheep farming in Sutherland seems to have been

reached towards the end of the 1870s. By this time the pastures were beginning to deteriorate from exclusive grazing by sheep, lack of lime became evident and in places heather and bracken began to encroach on green land. Prices began to fall, it became more difficult to obtain tenants and as a result the proportion of land under deer forest was increased.

46 The position of the crofters did not improve as the century progressed: they were forced to live in small, congested, infertile and exposed coastal townships, they had no security of tenure and the problem of the landless cottar became acute in many districts. On an average each crofter had 4 acres of arable land and 36 acres of outrun (held in common with others): his rents averaged 15/- to 20/- per acre for arable land plus hill grazings on which he kept two cows, one stirk, and ten sheep or one horse, one cow, one stirk and ten sheep. The cattle were mainly black Highlanders, the sheep Blackfaced/Cheviot crosses. The number of holdings in the county of Sutherland in 1870 was as follows:-

Not exceeding 5 acres	.....	1,676
5 - 20 "	.....	543
20 - 50 "	.....	53
50 - 100 "	.....	22
Over 100 "	.....	44
		<hr/>
		2,338
		<hr/>

The 44 large farms averaged 27,000 acres each.

30 Hand industries have never been of much significance in West Sutherland. In 1849 the Duchess of Sutherland established an Industrial Society at Golspie and in 1886 the Sutherland Home Industries was set up. Both these organisations attempted to encourage home industries but they received little support from the isolated townships of the northwest.

In 1870 the Duke of Sutherland provided employment for many of his tenants by commencing reclamation works. These schemes, which included land reclamation beside Loch Shin and in Strath Kildonan, the opening of lime quarries at Lairg and Heilam, the reopening of the coal mine at Brora, the establishment of other industrial projects and the development of railways, had practically no effect in the extreme north nor on the west coast, although they were highly beneficial to the small tenants in the southeast.

The decline in population which began in West Sutherland with the establishment of sheep farms and the associated clearances has continued unbroken from 1871 until the present day. The clearances, however, as well as being a direct cause of rural depopulation, were also responsible for a redistribution of population whereby both the pre-existing townships and the newly established coastal ones became seriously congested. It was from these congested "eviction settlements" that most of the emigration from West Sutherland took place.

24

The evidence taken by the Napier Commissioners in West Sutherland in 1883 shows that conditions in the three parishes were not uniform but in all the main grievance was the small size of the holdings on which the evicted people had to live. Other complaints included increases in rents, the lack of security and the lack of compensation for improvements. Medical services were shown to be inadequate transport was costly and unreliable and poor harbours and inadequate piers handicapped the fishing. It was also suggested that the railway should be extended from Lairg to Laxford for the benefit of the fishing industry. Durness, the largest parish and the one with most land under sheep farms, had the smallest population which had been declining continuously for a considerable time. Its small tenants complained of a lack of arable land, especially in the poor townships of Laid and Lerin and of serious congestion in all the coastal areas. In Eddrachillis the Kinlochbervie tenants also complained of a lack of arable land and they petitioned for the provision of telegraph and transport facilities. The fishermen wanted more and better boats and equipment and improved piers, with some shelter. Congestion on the land was bad in Eddrachillis but conditions seem to have been the worst of all in the coastal areas of Assynt. The only townships in Assynt which had resisted eviction were Elphin and Knockan (in 1863) but they were now suffering from a division of the holdings for cottars.

The cottar and pauper problem in this parish in 1883 was very acute for it contained 360 crofters, 200 cottars and 100 paupers. The need for a good quay and for a better fishing station at Lochinver was stressed by several witnesses. For all three parishes remoteness and sparsity of population were stressed as serious hindrances to any potential developments and it was shown that, while adequate land could have been available for crofters it was either under sheep farms or deer forest at that time.

Mr. Evander McIver, factor to the Duke of Sutherland for the Scourie district, naturally defended the action of the estate in clearing settled areas for farms and in increasing rents. He justifiably emphasised the great benefits provided by the Duke in building roads, bridges, and paths, in providing charity and in assisting emigration. He explained also his absolute insistence on correct and prompt payment of rent and said that the revaluation of 1878 had shown a necessity for increases of rent in certain areas. While admitting that sheep farming was declining in prosperity and that the farms were difficult to let, Mr. McIver refused to consider the possibility of making more land available for the crofters, for whom, in his estimation, emigration was the sole solution.

Many witnesses in Sutherland, in Lewis and in other parts of the Highlands deprecated the encouragement of crofters working as part time fishermen, stating that

agriculture and fishing should be separate occupations but that unfortunately at that time, the holdings were too small to make such a separation practicable.

West Sutherland 1883

24	<u>Parish</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Rental</u>		<u>Acreage</u>	
			<u>Parish</u>	<u>Per Head</u>	<u>Parish</u>	<u>Per Head</u>
	Durness	987	£5,948	120/6	140,812	142.66
	Eddrachillis	1,525	£4,979	65/3	135,555	88.88
	Assynt	2,781	£5,845	42/0	110,111	39.59

The disproportion between the three parishes of West Sutherland is due to the presence of several vast sheep farms in Durness which were not repeated on the same scale in Assynt or Eddrachillis.

CROFTERS' HOLDINGS WEST SUTHERLAND 1883

24

(Appendix to Napier Report 1884)

	<u>Assynt</u>	<u>Durness</u>	<u>Eddrachillis</u>
Number of Tenants	322	94	162
Total rent	£1,064	£256:15	£716
Average rent per lot	£3: 6: 1	£ 2:14: 8	£4: 8: 6
Total arable acreage	979	284	560
Average arable per lot	3.04 acres	3.02 acres	3.46 acres
Total improveable land	161 acres	31 acres	81 acres
Total improveable per lot	0.50 "	0.33 "	0.50 "
Total hill grazing	23,010 "	7,500 "	38,840 "
Average hill grazing per lot	71 "	80 "	215 "
Total rent - hill grazing	£609	£149	£355
Average rent - hill grazing	£1:17: 9	£1:11: 8	£2: 3: 9

STOCK

Horses	229	52	114
Cattle	1,427	221	492
Sheep	2,120	1,095	2,785

RENTS

Up to £3	193	41	64
£3 - £6	99	106	28
£6 - £10	27	14	2
£10 +	3	1	0

These figures show that in Durness the crofters' holdings were very severely restricted due to the vast acreages of the sheep farms and to the extensive areas under deer forest. Durness actually possessed a higher proportion of good land than either Eddrachillis or Assynt, on account of the extensive outcrops of Durness Limestone, but as this good land was mostly within the limits of the sheep farms, the Durness holdings had the lowest average rents and the lowest average arable acreages. The numbers of stock kept were correspondingly small.

V. LEGISLATION AND ENQUIRIES CONCERNING THE CROFTING DISTRICTS FROM 1886

1. LEGISLATION

The main Acts of Parliament concerning the crofting districts passed since the publication of the Napier Report in 1884 were the Small Landholders' (Scotland) Acts.

There were four of these, viz:-

1. The Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act, 1886.
2. The Small Landholders' (Scotland) Act, 1911.
3. The Land Settlement (Scotland) Act, 1919.
4. The Small Landholders' and Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act, 1931.

Other Acts of importance relating to the crofting districts were:

The West Highlands and Islands Works Act, 1891.

The Congested Districts (Scotland) Act, 1897.

The Crofters' Common Grazings Regulation Acts, 1891 and 1908.

The Highlands and Islands (Medical Services) Grant Act, 1913.

The Housing (Rural Workers) Act, 1926.

The Housing Agricultural Population (Scotland) Act, 1938.

The Hill Farming Act, 1946.

The Agriculture (Scotland) Act, 1948.

The Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act of 1886 was a direct outcome of the Napier Report. It was by far the most

important act ever passed concerning the crofting districts and its provisions determined the unique system of land tenure which persists in those areas today. Tenants of holdings not exceeding £30 in rent and in the crofting districts of the crofting parishes were entitled to security of tenure, fair rents, compensation for improvements and a limited right of bequest to members of the holder's family.

47 The Crofters' Commission was appointed to deal with all questions relating to crofters' holdings and one of its first duties was to grant enlargements to holdings wherever suitable land was available. Between 1887 and 1890 fair rents were fixed in all the townships of West Lewis and West Sutherland, reductions were granted in almost every case and a large proportion of the arrears were cancelled. In subsequent years further fair rents were fixed elsewhere, enlargements were granted and, after the passing of the Crofters' Common Grazings Regulation Act, 1891, grazing regulations were laid down and the soumings^o stated. The Commission also dealt with the regulation of sea ware and peat cutting rights. In 1887 certain amendments were made to the original act by the Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act of that year.

^o the amount of stock to be grazed upon the common pasture by each tenant.

47

Fair rents fixed by the Crofters' Commission

	<u>West Lewis</u>	<u>West Sutherland</u>
Number of townships	35	51
Number of holdings	909	597
<u>Extent of holdings</u>		
Arable acreage	2686	1678
Outrun acreage	2108	3940
Grazing land	Township common and general common	
Previous rents	£2573	£1800
Fair rents	1741	1609
<u>Alterations in rent</u>		
Decrease	832	207
Increase	0	16

Crofters Common Grazings Regulation Acts, 1891 and 1908

The Act of 1891 entitled the crofters to appoint a committee to regulate common grazing rights, subject to the Crofters' Commission. The 1908 Act empowered the commissioners to appoint a committee without awaiting crofters' applications.

West Highlands and Islands Works Act, 1891 and Congested Districts Act, 1897

In 1891 and in 1897 two Acts were passed which made provision for small scale financial assistance for the crofting areas. These were respectively the West Highlands and Islands Works Act and the Congested Districts (Scotland) Act. The former authorised the distribution of sums of

money (for estimates of under £2,000) to County Councils in crofting districts for aiding the construction and improvement of small harbours, piers and boat slips. Over a period of years Lewis received as much as £12,000 from this source towards the harbour works at Ness. The latter act set up the Congested Districts Board to administer a fund of £35,000 per annum to "provide, equip, and adopt land for occupation by crofters and fishermen to whom assistance could be given by loan or grant; to provide assistance for the migration of crofters from the congested districts to other parts of Scotland: to develop the fishing industry by improving piers and harbours, fishermen's dwellings, and boat slips; to improve the agriculture of the Highlands by providing suitable seed potatoes, guarantees for telegraphic extensions etc. and to develop spinning, weaving and other rural industries". Nearly all the crofting districts of Scotland came within the jurisdiction of the Board and both West Lewis and West Sutherland derived considerable benefit from it.

48

Expenditure of the Congested Districts Board in Lewis
1897-1911

Marine works	£9,639	
Roads and paths	5,158	
Seeds, stocks	1,835	
Home industries	305	
Telegraph and money order offices	<u>16,998</u>	Total: £33,935

The Small Landholders' (Scotland) Act of 1911 was passed to encourage the formation of small agricultural holdings, and to amend the law relating to the tenure of such holdings. Statutory smallholdings were to include, with some exceptions, all holdings rented at less than £50 and of less than 50 acres in extent, and smallholders were to be able to obtain loans for improvement. By the terms of this Act the Crofters' Commission was succeeded by the Scottish Land Court and the Congested Districts Board by the Board of Agriculture.

49

The Highlands and Islands (Medical Services) Grant Act, 1913, emanated from the Dewar Report of 1912. By this act the Highlands and Islands (Medical Service) Fund was set up which provided a state health service for that region which remained in force until the National Health Service came into operation in 1947.

The Land Settlement (Scotland) Act, 1919

This is the most important act ever passed in connection with land settlement in Scotland. The Act extended the powers and duties of the Board of Agriculture and additional funds were granted for land settlement; many land settlement schemes were instituted for providing smallholdings for ex-Servicemen. The Act consisted of five parts:-

1. The Board of Agriculture was empowered to acquire land for land settlement.

2. Amendments to the 1911 Act provided assistance for the equipment and adaption of land settled and the constitution of new holdings was made possible without reference to the Land Court. The Land Court, however, was given the duty of fixing compensation payable in connection with the constitution of holdings.

3. Part III concerned the provision of allotments by local authorities.

4. The Board could make loans to land banks and advances to holders settled under the Act for the purchase of livestock, seeds, fertilizers or implements.

5. The Board was directed to give preference in land settlement to ex-Service applicants until 1921.

50 The Act had less effect in West Lewis than in other parts of the Outer Hebrides as only one farm remained to be broken up, namely Galson, which was soon divided into small: holdings. Some fishermen's holdings were established in Ness on the common grazing land along the Cross-Skigersta road. In Sutherland the Act did not lead to the establish: ment of new holdings although the Board of Agriculture actually bought certain farms for that purpose, namely at
51 Eriboll and Keoldale in Durness. (See under Land Settlement).

The Small Landholders and Agricultural Holdings

(Scotland) Act 1931 related, in part, to statutory smallholdings and contained important amendments regarding resumption of holdings, statutory small tenants, assessment of compensation,

succession to holdings and the powers of the Department of Agriculture (known as the Board of Agriculture before 1928). The Agricultural Land Utilization Act of 1931 was not enforced but it gave permanent power to the Department of Agriculture in regard to the compulsory purchase of land.

Rural Housing Acts

Two Acts of Parliament concerning housing which have been of great benefit to the crofting areas are the Housing (Rural Workers') Act 1926 and the Housing Agricultural Population (Scotland) Act 1938. The earlier act provided for grants to be available for the improvement of rural workers' houses. It proved one of the most successful schemes for the improvement of rural houses throughout Scotland and its repeal at the end of the War was much lamented. The
 52 Housing Act of 1938 followed a report published in 1937 which showed that, in spite of improvements, many new houses were required. This Act enabled local authorities to give grants for new houses to replace unfit dwellings occupied by agricultural subjects.

Post War Agricultural Acts

Recent Acts of Parliament concerning agriculture have paid considerable attention to the improvement of hill farming in Scotland thus the crofting areas have been directly affected by them. The Hill Farming Act of 1946 enacted many
 53 of the suggestions made in the report of the Balfour Committee in 1944. The Act provided for the payment of 50% grants

towards the cost of approved comprehensive improvement schemes to be carried out on hill farming land. Many schemes have been approved for such improvements in the crofting districts including some in West Lewis and West Sutherland.

The Agriculture (Scotland) Act 1948 was passed to amend the enactments relating to agricultural holdings and land tenure in Scotland. It made further provision for the improvement and development of agriculture and for the use of agricultural land in Scotland, it authorised grants for providing houses and buildings for landholders and cottars in the Highlands and Islands and it amended the provisions of the 1938 Housing Act. It also set up eleven permanent Agricultural Executive Committees to replace the more numerous war time committees and these were given wide administrative powers .

2. SPECIAL ENQUIRIES

47 After the passing of the Crofters' Act, it soon became apparent that in some parts of the West Highlands there was still acute distress and widespread poverty and that in some areas congestion on the land was still severe. The special problems of certain areas, notably in the Outer Hebrides, called for separate investigation and accordingly between 1886 and 1906 no less than six enquiries were made into conditions within that region.

47 The reports of the Crofters' Commission also indicated that it might be possible to find some land, at that time under deer forest, which could be used for constituting new holdings or for enlarging existing ones. It was for this purpose that the Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands) was set up in 1892.

Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands) 1892

54 The (Deer Forest) Commissioners inspected deer forests, grazing farms and grouse moors throughout the Highlands and Islands. Much of the deer forest was known to be impossible for crofter settlement but it was hoped to find land suitable for new holdings, land for extensions to grazings and land for occupation as moderately sized pastoral farms. The types of holdings contemplated were self sustained holdings, small holdings giving only part time employment and fishermen's holdings.

The Commissioners stressed the special conditions of the north west mainland, and emphasised that Lewis required separate and entirely different treatment. The simple enlargement of grazings was often impossible and wherever practicable the Commissioners advocated the adoption of the club farm whereby a township's stock was managed communally.

The following suggestions were made for the county of Sutherland (not merely for the West Sutherland parishes):

<u>Sutherland</u>	<u>From Old</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Arable</u>	<u>Pasture</u>	
	acres	acres	acres
54 For new holdings	2426	115234	1157660
For extension of existing holdings	370	118892	119262
For moderate farms	1500	118476	119976

The Commissioners considered that special treatment was required for Lewis owing to its exceptional circumstances and reference was made once more to the smallness and to the subdivision of the holdings, to congestion and to poverty. Statistics provided showed that Barvas had no deer forests and that it contained only two farms, namely Dell, rented at £68 and Galson, rented at £865. Dalmore and Dalbeg farms, rented at £50, also came within the region of West Lewis. The Commissioners suggested that parts of these farms should be made available as crofters' grazing lands.

Enquiries concerning the Outer Hebrides

The majority of these enquiries related to the island of Lewis where the economic situation was particularly grave.

The following reports were published:

- 55 1888 Fraser Report on the Cottar Population of the Lews.
- 31 1902 Brand Report on the Social Condition of the
 People of Lewis.
- 56 1903 Report on the Social Condition of the People of
 Uist.
- 57 1903 Report of the Lewis Local Committee.
- 58 1905 Dittmar Report on the Sanitary Condition of the
 Lews.
- 59 1906 Maxwell Report on Rating and the general
 Financial Position in the Outer Hebrides.
- 55 1888 Fraser Report on the Cottar Population of the
 Lews.

Extensive enquiries established that destitution existed in Lewis and that the gravest apprehension existed for the future. It was pointed out that any deterioration of the situation would result in a major crisis for which the powers of the parochial boards would be quite inadequate.

23 The condition of the people was shown to be very similar to that described in the Report of Sir John McNeill in 1851 and that the reduction in population which had been advocated then and on other occasions had not taken place.

55 The impressions derived in the preparation of the report were described as follows: "On all sides we observed evidence of the deepest poverty and dejection; the soil is of the poorest quality; everywhere the potato crop is nearly consumed; few have money, and fewer still credit with the local merchants. Within the next two months the bulk of the population in Lochs and elsewhere will be brought face to face with the necessity of killing their cattle and sheep to sustain life, while those who have no stock must either appeal to the parochial board or starve. No doubt there is a lamentable absence of energy and activity among the people; strong men are to be seen at home idly watching the privations endured by their wives and children; crofts, too small to maintain one individual, are made the home of three or even four families; grown up children who should long since have opened a career for themselves, are still inmates of parents' houses; and a listless apathy is everywhere apparent. This apathy we mainly ascribe to the baneful effect of subsistence on eleemosynary aid."

The Medical Officer attributed the crisis to over: population and looked forward to the future with "great apprehension". The Inspector of Poor for Barvas stated that 81 paupers received weekly aliment of 2/6d. or less and that additional sums were expended on paupers' rents, repairs, clothing, food and bedding.

31

1902. Brand Report on the Social Condition of the People of Lewis

This detailed and extremely comprehensive report provides the fullest account of conditions within the island of Lewis, together with the requisite historical background. Following the Fraser Report of 1888 the Brand Report showed that poor law administration eventually broke down in 1888, that the numbers of paupers and pauper lunatics in Barvas in particular, increased, and that special grants had to be made by the Board of Supervision and by the Scottish Office to relieve the situation. In the conclusion it was once more emphasised that Lewis had the most pressing problems to be found in all the crofting districts and that it was undoubtedly the most backward and primitive area in Scotland. The establishment of industries and technical instruction was advocated and it was also stated that the land question must be solved. Attention was drawn to the amount of work, especially manual work, which was done by the women.

57

1903. Report of the Lewis Local Committee

This report was requested by the Secretary of State for Scotland, following the publication of the Brand Report in 1902. Specific information and suggestions were requested concerning fisheries, education, occupation of land and public health. The Report of the Local Committee dealt with the subjects of Fisheries, Education, Occupation of the land and Public Health. The suggestions made included such schemes

constructing a railway from Stornoway to Carloway, enlarging holdings and reclaiming waste land, assisting the fishing industry in several ways and in improving transport, providing extensive technical education and building fever hospitals and a sanatorium.

57 In an appendix the Secretary of State pointed out to the Lewis Local Committee that many provisions for Lewis had been made in the past but that the people had consistently refused to avail themselves of the facilities offered. It might therefore be difficult to justify the excessive expenditure which the developments suggested would undoubtedly entail.

58 1905. Dittmar Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Lewis

This was a special report to the Local Government Board for Scotland. Visits were made to several townships including Arnol and Bragar, adjacent townships in the south of Barvas parish. The report of the investigators is expressed in very strong terms as they were shocked and horrified by the conditions which they found. It is unusual to read in an official report "All the houses are appalling. The whole township and every house in it is uninhabitable and should be condemned, except for three or four stone and lime houses (Arnol)". For Bragar they say "Every house is uninhabitable and a disgrace to our civilisation. Cattle housing is universal, the houses are surrounded by filth and some contain no beds and no furniture of any kind."

The water supply in both townships was from shallow wells only, quite unprotected and liable to serious pollution. The houses were "black houses" with no opening windows, no chimneys, bare floors and stone walls; they were filled with soot and smoke, they were often devoid of any furniture and were indescribably filthy and insanitary, as they housed people, cattle, sheep and poultry. There had been no improvement in housing conditions in these villages within a whole century.

<u>1901</u>	<u>Bragar</u>	<u>Arnol</u>
Number of crofts	107	45
Number of families	131	59
Number of squatters	24	14
Total population	704	347

The fact that the number of families exceeded the number of crofts was due to the presence of cottars on the crofts where the holdings had been subdivided. The squatters mostly resided on the common grazings. The above figures thus show an extreme degree of congestion on the land for averages of approximately seven people per holding (all were using crofters' lands whether legally or not) where the holdings are so small and poor are obviously excessive.

59

1906. Maxwell Report on Rating and the Financial Position in the Outer Hebrides

In Lewis the high rates were due primarily to the low rental per family. This was partly due to the poverty and

small size of the holdings and partly to the very numerous cottars and squatters, who, although paying no rent or rates, were usually wage earners and as such were often more prosperous than the crofters. The rating problems in Lewis, while still serious in 1906, would have been unbearable without the Education Department's special provision for the landward areas and without generous grants from the County Council to relieve road rates. Poor relief was the main item of expenditure from the rates but as few islanders would use the poor houses, they were too large and a great burden on local rates.

The rates paid varied according to the status of the tenant. Crofters rents were low and their assessable rental had been reduced by the Poor Law Act - by 5% for Barvas, Lochs and Uig and by 10% for Stornoway. All agricultural subjects, moreover, were rated on only three-eighths of their assessable rental (Agricultural Rates Act 1896) thus the average crofter should have been able to pay the local rates. Non-agricultural tenants received no deductions under the Act. The proprietor's rates were excessive, and in 1905 the proprietor's rates on the Matheson Estate amounted to 23% of the rental. The town rates in Stornoway were also very high, constituting a relatively greater burden on the town: idwellers than the local rates did on the crofters in the landward districts.

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Average gross rental per croft 1904-5</u>	<u>Average assess-able rental per Croft 1904-5</u>	<u>Actual rates per £ levied on occupiers of crofts 1904-5</u>	<u>Average amount paid in respect of each croft 1904-5</u>
Barvas	1.17. 4	13. 4	8. 3½	5. 6½
Lochs	1.14.10	12. 5	8. 2½	5. 1½
Uig	2. 7. 3	16.10	7. 4½	6. 2½
Stornoway Landward	1.15. 1	11.10	3.10	2. 3½
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>1.18. 2</u>	<u>13. 4½</u>		

	<u>Total Assess-ment Imposed</u>	<u>Paid by Major Matheson Total</u>	<u>Falling on other rate: payers</u>
Barvas	£1,444.10. 2	£1,011.18. 1	£432.12. 1

In Barvas the parish rate increased from 3/7 in 1874 to 13/11 in 1905 and the total rates increased from 4/4 in 1874 to 16/10½ in 1905 of which approximately half was paid by the owner and half by the occupier. Thus this parish, being an exceedingly congested area of low rented small agricultural holdings, had a tax yield quite inadequate for the barest needs of civilisation. It was only by special grants that local administration was able to continue to function.

The general conclusions showed that in Barvas and in Stornoway the gross valuation had increased since 1896, and

that the poor rate showed the greatest increase and was the heaviest burden on the people. In all the Lewis parishes the owners paid more than their share of the assessments, the occupiers a correspondingly smaller amount.

19

Hilleary Report, 1938

It was not until 1936 that a further general survey of conditions within the Highland region was undertaken. In that year the Scottish Economic Committee appointed a committee to "examine the economic condition of the Highlands and Islands and the possibilities of the development of the local industries therein." The areas concerned were the seven crofting counties. The report which the Committee produced in 1938, known as the Hilleary Report, dealt fully with all aspects of the Highland situation with special reference to the crofting districts. Owing to the outbreak of War in 1939, no legislation followed this report whose main findings were as follows:

- (1) The unsatisfactory economic conditions within the Highlands were reflected in the unbalanced structure of the population.
- (2) The limited resources available for commercial purposes had been only incompletely developed.
- (3) Production from the land and from the sea was below capacity.
- (4) Marketing difficulties were retarding improvements and organised marketing was advocated with a Central

Marketing Agency.

- (5) Social conditions needed energetic measures in certain areas particularly in regard to water supplies and communications.
- (6) Many crofts were incapable of providing a livelihood thus the necessity for local industries was evident.
- (7) The appointment of a Development Commissioner with wide powers was recommended.
- (8) The Fishery Board should investigate the possibilities of extending fishing in the Highlands and it should have powers to give grants and loans to fishermen.
- (9) Piers, harbours, and landing places should be improved.
- (10) Forestry should be encouraged in every possible way.
- (11) Water power resources should be developed to the full.
- (12) The tourist industry should be encouraged.

Owing to the outbreak of war in 1939 few of these recommendations could be carried out immediately but since 1945 much has been done to assist the Highland region in general along the lines outlined above.

Lewis Association

During the war the Lewis Association was founded by a group of interested islanders. It has published a number of reports since 1943 which provide very valuable information on the present day problems of the island.

West Highland Survey

In 1944 the West Highland Survey was set up under the

direction of Dr.F.Fraser Darling to report fully on present day conditions within the crofting areas. The basis of this investigation was a township survey of every crofting community. The report is not yet available to the general public.

Commission on Crofting, 1951

In 1951 a Commission of enquiry into crofting conditions was set up under the chairmanship of Principal Taylor. This investigation is proceeding at the present time but it is interesting to record that already the differences between Lewis and the mainland have been emphasised both by Lewismen and others.

C. ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL SURVEY

VI. LAND SETTLEMENT AND VALUATION

1. LAND SETTLEMENT

In 1886 West Lewis and West Sutherland were both parts of vast Highland estates, belonging respectively to Lady Matheson and to the Duke of Sutherland. Since that time important changes have taken place in land ownership in both regions but their respective patterns of land use remain practically the same. West Lewis is still exclusively a crofting area while West Sutherland retains its deer forests, its sheep farms, its home farms and also its crofting areas. In spite of these contrasts the majority of the inhabitants of both regions are still small landholders (crofters) living in rural townships.

Land Settlement Schemes 1887-1912

The enquiries of the Deer Forest Commissioners, which began in 1892, confirmed the findings stated in the Napier Report in 1884; they too suggested improvements for the crofter population of West Sutherland but for West Lewis they found difficulties almost insurmountable.

West Sutherland

In 1892 the West Sutherland parishes were divided between large sheep farms, deer forests and crofters' lands as follows:

West Sutherland Parishes 1892

54	<u>Parish</u>	<u>Sheep Farms</u>		<u>Deer Forests</u>		<u>Crofters' Lands</u>	
		<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Rent</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Rent</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Rent</u>
	Durness	75,000	£2,075	18,200	£865	11,800	£287
	Eddrachillis	27,551	£371	77,800	£1,380	30,200	£607
	Assynt	46,880	£1,485	28,500	£950	31,040	£1,067
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>149,431</u>	<u>£3,931</u>	<u>124,500</u>	<u>£3,195</u>	<u>73,040</u>	<u>£1,961</u>

Sheep Farms in West Sutherland 1892

54	<u>Parish</u>	<u>Arable</u>	<u>Outrun</u>	<u>Moor Pasture</u>	<u>Total Acreage</u>	<u>Rent</u>
	Durness	360	1410	73,230	75,000	£2,075
	Eddrachillis	69	103	27,379	27,551	£ 308
	Assynt	167	158	46,555	46,880	£1,485
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>596</u>	<u>1671</u>	<u>147,164</u>	<u>149,431</u>	<u>£3,868</u>

(The sheep farms of the region were distributed unevenly between the three parishes as the largest of them were situated on the Durness Limestone outcrops and were therefore found mostly in the parish of Durness.)

The above statistics show the justification of the crofters' demands for more and better land. They also show the variations between the three parishes. In Eddrachillis the total acreage of all the farms was only equal to that of one of the great farms of Durness. Assynt occupied an intermediate position with regard to its land utilization; its acreage under small holdings appears more satisfactory at a glance, but its total population was much greater than that

of Durness or Eddrachillis and congestion in the coastal town:
:ships was actually more severe than anywhere else.

54 The interrogation of the factor of the Sutherland Estates by the Deer Forest Commissioners indicated their sympathetic attitude towards the crofters of West Sutherland; statistics provided by the estate (see above) showed that the proportion of land under deer forest and sheep farms was exceedingly high. The crofters wanted more land by breaking up the small sheep farms (which had formerly been under crofter occupation) and by reducing the size of the very large farms. They were much less interested in obtaining land from the deer forests for they knew it to be unsuitable and feared that its acquisition might greatly increase their rents. The factor was adamant that there was no land suitable either for holdings or for enlargements but the findings of the Commissioners did not agree

Lands scheduled for crofters' holdings
by Deer Forest Commissioners 1892

- A. For new holdings with corresponding pasture.
- B. For extensions of grazings.
- C. For moderately sized holdings (grazing farms mainly).

54	Parish	A.(acres)		B.(acres)		C.(acres)	
		<u>Old</u> <u>Arable</u>	<u>Pasture</u>	<u>Old</u> <u>Arable</u>	<u>Pasture</u>	<u>Old</u> <u>Arable</u>	<u>Pasture</u>
	Assynt	130	13605	5	7151	26	9833
	Eddrachillis	43	4704	15	17461	19	4854
	Durness	512	5775	68	17743	72	8567
	TOTAL (acres)	685	24084	88	42555	117	23254

Few new settlements actually materialised but the extensions granted to common grazings enabled the small tenants to increase their sheep stocks which had for long represented their main source of cash income. The enlargements granted between 1889 and 1912 were as follows:

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<u>Farm</u>	<u>Townships enlarged</u>	<u>Extent of enlargement</u>
<u>Assynt Parish</u>		
Ardvar)	Stoer townships	6000 acres
Oldany)		
Achmore)		
Part of Glencanisp)		
Deer Forest)		
Ledmore farm	Elphin and Knockan	Not stated
Inver farm	Badidarroch	890 acres
Clashmore farm	Stoer townships	91 acres
<u>Durness Parish</u>		
Rispond farm	Durness townships	3900 acres
<u>Eddrachillis Parish</u>		
Sandwood Farm)	Oldshore townships	1940 acres
Sheigra Farm)		small area

In Durness the whole of Rispond farm was granted to 67 holders in 1890. After lengthy disputes parts of the great sheep farms of Keoldale, Balnakeil and Eriboll were also given up to increase the extent of the crofters' lands. In 1907, however, the Crofters' Commission explained that no more land could be made available to small holders in Durness.

In Assynt land was granted readily to the congested townships of Stoer from the farms of Oldany, Ardvar and

Achmore. In 1888 alone 6,000 acres were granted from these farms at a rent (including 700 acres from Glencanisp deer forest) of £175. The inland townships of Elphin and Knocken were granted some land from Ledmore farm (1891) and more again in 1911. The provision of enlargements from deer forests was often much more difficult as the quality of the land was seldom suitable: this affected the crofters from the Inverkirkraig district of Assynt and the enlargements which they were allowed were rented relatively heavily. Inver farm (890 acres) was granted to the crofters of Badidarroch who also received some land from Glencanisp deer forest. These enlargements increased their rents threefold.

Clashmore was one of the last farms to have been formed on the Sutherland Estates in Assynt but in 1888, 91 acres of it were granted to the crofters. They were dissatisfied with this and in 1908 the Duke divided it into 21 lots and two parks. Six remaining lots were let to cottars. In 1905 revaluations were carried out in many parts of this parish.

In Eddrachillis some grazing land was granted from the sheep farms, all of which were almost exclusively pastoral farms, (compare Durness where Balnakiel and Keoldale had 820 and 731 acres of arable land respectively), thus very little arable or green pasture land could be provided at all.

Sandwood farm (1940 acres) was granted to 27 holders from the neighbouring townships in 1895, and Sheigra was divided into 7 small holdings in 1912.

The new holdings that were established in the northern part of the mainland required from five to twenty acres of arable land, and pasture for forty to two hundred sheep.

In West Sutherland therefore the main work of the Crofters' Commission and later of the Land Court consisted of dealing with grazing regulations, with establishing small tenants on farms broken up for them, with fixing fair rents, and with revaluing certain districts.

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A statement made on Sutherland in 1903 by the Congested Districts Board referred to the great scarcity of arable land in the crofting townships, to the use made of the enlarged common grazings (obtained from sheep farms) and to the general improvements in housing and living standards which resulted from the Crofters' Act.

West Lewis

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In West Lewis crofter witnesses examined by the Deer Forest Commissioners stressed the extreme congestion and overcrowding within the townships and they demanded land from Galson farms and from Melbost, Borge. Other evidence showed that while the Lewis holdings were undoubtedly uneconomically small, subletting and subdivision had continued in spite of its constant prohibition by the estate authorities. Moreover, arable and grazing lands were both usually of poor quality and were not well managed. Lady Matheson's agent presented the following statistical statement,

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explaining that since 1844 the number of holdings (many of them illegal cottars holdings) had increased by 995.

Matheson Estate Rental 1884

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Number of Crofters</u>	<u>Crofters Rental</u>	<u>Farmers, Castle Grounds etc.</u>	<u>Sportsmen's Fishings</u>	<u>Other Proprie: tors</u>
Stornoway	982	£1723.14.6	£1707.0.0	£749.0.0	£618. 5.6
Barvas	962	1775. 7. 0	352.0.0	491.0.0.	285.13.0
Uig	614	1487. 5. 5	780.0.0.	3307.0.0.	179.14.7
Lochs	518	931. 3. 6	140.0.0.	2281.0.0.	262.16.6
TOTAL	3076	£5917.10. 5	£2979.0.0	£6835.0.0	£1346. 9.7

From the above it is evident that Barvas is more exclusively a crofting parish than any of the others; it is not surprising therefore that its problems of poverty and over-crowding were considered to be practically insoluble. The Commissioners were only able to schedule the following lands for crofters holdings in West Lewis.

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<u>Parish</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Land Scheduled</u>	
		<u>Old Arable</u>	<u>Pasture</u>
Barvas	Dalebeg grazings	78 acres	1795 acres
	Galson	692 "	5248 "

This small table shows the absolute impossibility of providing additional land for small holders within the immediate vicinity of the existing townships. The Crofters'

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Commission allotted 60 acres of grazing land from Galson farm for the crofters of Mid Borge and in 1909, 650 acres were granted to the crofters of Garinin, Carloway.

Land Settlement Schemes of the Board of Agriculture 1912 +
West Lewis

After the passing of the 1911 Act the Board of Agriculture received numerous applications for land. These applications were especially numerous from the Outer Hebrides where there were three classes of applicants, viz.

(a) fishermen, requiring also five to eight acres of arable land and twenty to thirty acres of rough pasture, (b) crofters, to whom fishing was a subsidiary occupation, and (c) existing landholders who required enlargements to their holdings.

Frequent reference was made to the exceptionally difficult conditions in Lewis and it was pointed out that few of the numerous applications for enlargements and for holdings could be granted as there was insufficient land available. Few small holders were willing to migrate and some mainland proprietors were unwilling to accept island migrants. The Board also received many applications for financial assistance under the 1911 Act but they were averse to making loans where cottars occupied some of the arable land, as so often happened in Lewis.

In 1918 several Board of Agriculture schemes for Lewis were suspended as Lord Leverhulme, who had purchased the island in that year, had other plans for his estate and did not favour the crofting way of life. During his proprietorship numerous cases were brought against him by the Lewis crofters who demanded compensation for the resumption of parts

of their common grazing lands and for other, sometimes obscure, reasons. In 1920 and 1921, land agitation was widespread and in Lewis cottars and squatters settled forcibly upon Coll and Gress farms in East Lewis. The Board and Lord Leverhulme failed to reach a settlement on this issue: similarly, the Board was unable to proceed with land settlement schemes under the 1919 Act. Later, the Board had to break up practically every farm in Lewis for small holdings but before this took place the Land Court felt obliged to report in 1922 that

51 "We must assume that even the island of Lewis is part of a civilised community in which the ordinary law of the land may be invoked to prevent or put down disorder." There was little land raiding in West Lewis, however, as all the land, except Galson farm, was already under crofter occupation. The breaking up of that farm in 1923 into 52 new holdings was practically the last scheme the Board could undertake in the Long Island as all the farms available had by that time been

50 taken up. In 1923 the Board took over 484 acres of common grazing land in Ness on feu. This was divided into 135 two acre lots to be rented at an annual rental of 10/- each. This area, between Cross and Skigersta, is still the property of the Department of Agriculture.

West Sutherland

In West Sutherland the Act of 1911 brought fewer applications for assistance than it had done in West Lewis. The Land Settlement Act of 1919, however, brought several

applications for land for small holdings for ex-Service men. These requests were made at a time when, as in Lewis, changes in land ownership were taking place, but there was no Lord Leverhulme in Sutherland and the changes which occurred there were not of a spectacular kind. The land settlement problem which existed in West Sutherland was the inequitable distribution of the land, especially the good land in Durness, between the sheep farmers and the crofters. In many of the 'Clearance' townships of all three parishes the holdings were too small to provide a living and, with rising living costs and very few subsidiary sources of employment, it meant that, unless the Board intervened to assist returning ex-Servicemen, further emigration from the region would take place.

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Accordingly, when the Eriboll Estate, Durness (27140 acres) was up for sale in 1919, the Board purchased it with the intention of enlarging existing holdings at Laird and of constituting 15 new holdings at Eriboll whose settlers should

62 take over the sheep stock and work it as a club farm. The enlargements were made but eventually it was realised that this property was not suitable for small holdings and, after working it for a while the Board sold it to a Border sheep farmer in 1926, at great financial loss to itself.

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In 1921 the Board acquired the 30,000 acre pastoral farm of Keoldale, also in Durness. This farm provided 50 enlargements for the Durness crofters' holdings and the large sheep stock was taken over by 43 shareholders from the Durness

townships and worked as a club farm.

In Assynt and in Eddrachillis, where several of the smaller farms and considerable areas of grazing land had been granted to the crofters by the Crofters' Commission before the First World War, no significant changes in land settlement took place after the War had ended.

Land Settlement today

In both regions the present land settlement patterns were established by 1925 and, although there have been some changes in land ownership since then, these have had more effect upon the provision of subsidiary employment than in affecting the working of the crofts.

In West Lewis, the land is now divided between four estates, each consisting of a large number of crofting townships and their common grazing lands. The only farms are the small rented farms at Dell in Ness and the glebe at Barvas.

Farms in West Lewis

<u>Name</u>	<u>Extent</u>	<u>Stock</u>
Mill Farm, Dell	120 acres	150 sheep (90 at Dell 140 on North Rona) 10 head of cattle
Barvas Glebe	640 acres	300 sheep 20 head of cattle

The Cross-Skigersta area in Ness is still owned by the Department of Agriculture. There is very little land not classified as agricultural although a number of the inhabitants are cottars or squatters.

The estates and the crofting townships of West Lewis
are as follows:

Estate	Extent	Township	Number of Holdings
Galson Estates Ltd.	Butt of Lewis to Upper Barvas	Eoropie	37)
		Fivepenny	5)
		Knockaird	18)
		Port of Ness	24)
		Eorodale	9) N
		Adabrock	14)
		Skigersta	20) E
		Lionel	38)
		Habost	48) S
		Swanibost	50)
		Cross	36) S
		North Dell	22
		South Dell	46
		Galson	52
		High Borve	9
		Fivepenny Borve	48
		Lower Shader	39
		Upper Shader	32
		Ballantrushal	22
		Upper Barvas	22
T O T A L		20	591
Cross-Skigersta Road (D.O.A.S.)	On skinned land between Cross and Skigersta	Cross-Skigersta	82
T O T A L		1	82
Barvas Estates Ltd.,	Lower Barvas to Shawbost River	Lower Barvas	65
		Brue	29
		Arnol	49
		North Bragar	45
		South Bragar	64
		North Shawbost	56
		New Shawbost	35
T O T A L		7	343

Estate	Extent	Township	Number of Holdings
Lewis Island Crofters Ltd.	South Shawbost to Carloway River	South Shawbost	45
		Dalemore	10
		Dalebeg	6
		Upper Carloway	58
		Borrowston	16
		Garinin	27
T O T A L		6	162
Carloway Estates Ltd.	South of Carloway River to Callanish (part only in W.Lewis region)	Kirivick	14
		Knock	31
		Doune Carloway	24
T O T A L		3	69
T O T A L WEST LEWIS		37	1247

In West Sutherland there are several estates of varying sizes. Some are exclusively sporting properties, some are large sheep farms, other have farms and sporting land and on some also there are a considerable number of crofting townships. Most of this land is privately owned but the large sheep farm at Keoldale in Durness still belongs to the Department of Agriculture. In addition to these varied types of rural settlement, there is one small urban nucleus, viz. the small village of Lochinver where a number of the inhabitants are definitely urban subjects. There is thus a much more varied settlement pattern here than in West Lewis although the total population is very much smaller.

The estates and crofting townships of West Sutherland are distributed as follows:

Crofting Townships in West Sutherland

Parish	Estate	Distribution	Townships	Number of Holdings
Durness	Durness	North coast between Kyle of Durness and Loch Eriboll	(Durine	17
			(Balvolich	5
			(Achines	1
			(Lerin	9
			(Sangomore	21
			(Smoo	6
			(Sangobeg Laid	5 19
		W.side Loch Eriboll		
TOTAL			8	83
Eddra: chillis	Scourie	Around Scourie Bay	(Scourie village	10
	"	"	(Scouriemore	25
	"	Isolated scattered	(Badcall, Scourie	11
	"	coastal townships	(Tarbet	5
	"	between Eddrachillis	(Fanagmore	2
	"	Bay and Loch Lax ford	(Foindlemore	6
	Kinloch: bervie	Along north	(Achriesgill	16
		shore of	(Badcall, Inchard	5
		Loch Inchard	(Rhuvoilt	4
			(Inshegra	1
		Between Lochs Inch & Clash	Kinlochbervie	12
		Coastal townships	(Oldshoremore	13
		partly on blown	(Drumnaguie	6
		sand, surrounding	(Pollan	4
		exposed bays	(Blairmore	8
		west of	(Balchreik	8
	Clath: ramb- Garbh "	Kinlochbervie	(Droman	5
			(Sheigra	7
		Isolated settlements	(Ardmore	5
		on N.inlet of	(Portlevorohy	1
		Loch Lax ford	(Arbheg (Skerrichan)	1
		S.shore L.Inchard	Achlighness	7
TOTAL			22	162

Parish	Estate	Distribution	Townships	Number of Holdings
Assynt	Assynt	Inland townships at	(Knockan	18
	"	extreme S.of parish.	(Elphin	20
	"	South of	(Inverkirkning	17
	"	Lochinver	(Badnaban	9
	"	village	(Strathan	16
	"	N.shore L.Inver	Badidarroch	9
	"	Isolated W.of Lochinver	Ardroe	4
	"	Along Stoer road	(Torbreck	5
	"	from Lochinver	(Rhicarn	1
	"	Surrounding sandy	(Achmelvich	28
	"	bays north of	(Clachtoll	29
	"	Loch Inver	(Stoer	22
	"		(Clashnessie	22
	"	On Torridonian	(Balchladich	10
	"	Sandstone peninsula	(Clashmore	27
	"	of Rhu Stoer	(Culkein-Achna:	28
	"		(carnion	
	"		(Achnacarnon	15
	"		(Raffin	5
	"	Along S.coast of	(Culkein-Drumbeg	19
	"	Eddrachillis Bay	(Drumbeg	20
	"		(Nedd	16
	"	E.of Kyleskue Ferry	Unapool	19
TOTAL			22	349
TOTAL	WEST SUTHERLAND		52	594

Non Crofting Areas of West Sutherland

1. Sheep Farms

	<u>Acreage</u> <u>Sheep Farms</u>	<u>Grazed</u> <u>Deer Forest</u>	<u>Sheep</u> <u>Stock</u>
Durness	84000	Small area	15000 approx.
Eddrachillis	7000 approx.	Large area	7000 approx.
Assynt	35000	Considerable area	7000 approx.
	<u>126000</u>		<u>29000</u>

(Estimates only are available)

II. Deer Forests

<u>Situation</u>	<u>Name of Forest</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Assynt	Glencanisp	32,000
Assynt & Eddrachillis	Inchnadamph	11,000
Assynt	Loch Assynt	15,092
Durness	Gobernuisgach	12,375
Eddrachillis & Durness	Ben Hee	21,134
Eddrachillis	Kinlochbervie	3,264
Eddrachillis & Durness	Reay and Glendhu	76,000
Eddrachillis & Durness	Corriekinloch	<u>10,000</u>
		<u>180,863</u>

III. Woodlands

Total woodland area

Durness	759 acres
Eddrachillis	584 " ^ø
Assynt	<u>1473</u> "
	<u>2816</u>

^ø Excludes areas planted since 1950.

2. VALUATION

The valuation statistics for the two regions show significant contrasts due to the variations in their respective land use patterns.

West Sutherland 1949-50

Yearly Rental or Value

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Agricultural Land</u>	<u>Non-Agricultural Land</u>	<u>Total</u>
Durness	£1768. 2. 11	£1598. 4. 0	£3366. 6. 11
Eddra: :chillis	1435.10. 5	2442. 0. 0	3877.10. 5
Assynt	2325.11. 6	3417. 5. 0	5742.16. 6
TOTAL	£5529. 4. 10	£7457. 9. 0	£12986.13. 10

Rateable Value

Durness	£257. 5. 0	£1394. 0. 0	£1651. 5. 0
Eddrachillis	153. 0. 0.	2453.10. 0	2606.10. 0
Assynt	1231.15. 0	2493. 0. 0	3724.15. 0
TOTAL	£1642. 0. 0	£6340.10. 0	£7982.10. 0

Valuation of West Lewis 1946-47

Yearly Rental or Value

Barvas	£2314.16. 3	£982. 0. 0	£3296.16. 3
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Rateable Value

Barvas	£347. 0. 3	£930. 5. 0	£1277. 5. 3
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(N.B. Although statistics for the two regions are for different years this would make no appreciable difference to the valuations. The total rentals have changed little since 1892 except, in the case of Assynt, where the value of the non-agricultural land has greatly increased.

In Sutherland the rentals from the non-agricultural land exceed those of the agricultural land: in Lewis the converse is true. Also, the total rentals and rateable values are much greater for Sutherland than for Lewis although the latter has many more holdings and a much denser total population. The average rental of the West Sutherland holdings is £21.16/- (there are actually very few holdings of this size in the region), but in West Lewis, the average rental of the 1077 small holdings (which represent all the holdings) is only £2 per annum. Thus when the respective areas of the two regions are taken into account, it is evident that the degree of congestion on the land in West Lewis must be considerable whereas the figures for West Sutherland suggest no such feature.

There are important differences between the three parishes of West Sutherland. In Durness, for instance, £1326 of the yearly value of the agricultural land (total £1768. 2.11d.) is accounted for by the three big sheep farms which make the agricultural land more valuable than the non agricultural. In Eddrachillis and in Assynt the value of the non agricultural land (mainly deer forest) exceeds that of the agricultural land and the rateable

value of the former is noticeably higher than that of the latter. Throughout West Sutherland a small minority of the population (25%) contributes 80% of the rates of the region.

The rateable values show the lowest total figures for the most densely peopled parish viz. Barvas. Here, on account of the small amount of non agricultural land, the total rateable value is only £2177. 5. 3. (all agricultural land is derated.) In Sutherland, on the other hand, as has been noted above, much of the land is non agricultural and thus it is heavily rated. Also its agricultural land is proportionately more valuable for the grazing land is of better quality and it includes large farms with some good arable land, as well as small holdings.

County rates are high in all crofting counties but in Lewis as only a small proportion of the population is non agricultural, the revenue from the rates is low. In Suther:
:land, on the other hand, as the proportion who pay high rates is greater, the total yield is much more. It can readily be appreciated therefore, that the financial resources of local authorities in purely crofting areas are very limited, that crofters are anxious to retain their agricultural status, that proprietors of sporting land will wish to make as much of it "agricultural" as possible by using it as grazing land and also that County Councils are anxious to obtain land and to provide houses for non agricultural purposes.

VII. LAND UTILIZATION

1. AGRICULTURE

(a) General Features

Agricultural activities in both regions are severely restricted by geographical conditions. The amount of land suitable for cultivation is strictly limited in extent, the range of crops that may be grown is very small and the practices of animal husbandry are determined by the quality of the grazing lands, the availability of winter feed supplies and isolation from the main centres of population. The basis of the agricultural economy in such hill farming districts is stock rearing, both sheep and cattle. Nevertheless, the absence of specialised dairy farms and the distance from retail supplies of dairy and other produce, make it inevitable for almost every holding to be self sufficient for milk and eggs and in summer, most can also provide themselves with cheese and butter. The cultivation of crops is wholly complementary to the rearing of stock and on the arable land the main crops grown are oats, potatoes, hay and turnips. In former times grain was grown for human consumption and meal was ground in local water driven mills. Today, the only food crop is the potato which still forms a staple article of diet. The cultivation of fruit and vegetables is very restricted in extent although it has been shown that, as long as

adequate shelter is provided, such enterprises can be highly successful. Many attempts have been made to encourage horticultural pursuits from time to time but they have met with little response locally.

The sale of stock and wool represent the only sources of cash income from the land and in both regions the sheep and cattle must generally be of hardy breeds and not require much hand feeding in winter. On the farms and on the crofts the general practices are similar although the former are usually able to undertake more specialisation and are more highly mechanised. Between the island and the mainland, however, there are considerable differences.

63 Although his holding is very small and very seldom an economic unit, the crofter is entitled to Government grants and subsidies in exactly the same way as the large scale farmer. In both regions the agricultural land is marginal and the grazing land hill grazing, thus, in addition to the acreage payments for arable crops and to the direct subsidies for hill stock, crofters and farmers alike derive considerable benefit from the special provisions made for assisting Marginal Agricultural Production (administered by the Agricultural Executives) and for comprehensive improvement schemes for hill farms under the Hill Farming Act of 1946.

For 1950 the financial assistance available in these two regions was as follows. Direct subsidies were paid for

potatoes (£10 per acre), for rye (£3 per acre), for hill sheep (5/- per breeding ewe or gimmer), for hill cattle (£7 per cow or in-calf heifer), and for calves (£4 for steers, £3 for heifer calves). Grants were available for drainage and agricultural water supply schemes, for bracken control, grass drying and for sundry other purposes. Financial assistance could also be obtained towards the cost of fertilizers for grass land and for agricultural lime. The Livestock Rearing Bill 1951 will provide further assistance to all hill farming regions, especially for cattle rearing. The Department of Agriculture also has schemes available in the crofting districts only, which include supplying travelling pony stallions for a small service fee, supplying bulls on loan to grazing committees and hiring rams at moderate fees. In addition, the Highlands and Islands Veterinary Service Scheme operates in the crofting counties whereby veterinary services are made available to all at moderate rates.

The Marginal Agricultural Production Schemes for West Lewis and West Sutherland are administered from Inverness and Thurso respectively. The Inverness Committee's scheme for 1951 continued the assistance for fencing portions of the common grazing land commenced in 1950. Help was also given for reclaiming, reseeding and regenerating grazings and for constructing silos and cattle shelters. The Thurso scheme gave assistance for

cultivating grass, seed oats and turnip seeds, for reclaiming semi derelict land and for reseeding old grassland.

Agricultural Statistics

West Lewis (Barvas Parish)

<u>Livestock (numbers)</u>	<u>1938</u>	<u>1945</u>	<u>1950</u>
Dairy cattle	1923	1792	1585
Beef cattle	71	39	24
Horses	453	382	288
Sheep	27335	34107	41402
Pigs	2	0	10
Poultry	16858	26563	29159

Crops (acres)

Barley	481	189	108
Oats	2260	2423	2423
Potatoes	569	612	598
Turnips	35	25	20
Rotation grasses	297	371	412
<u>Permanent grasses</u>	<u>1336</u>	<u>2408</u>	<u>2558</u>

<u>Total crops and grass</u>	<u>4978</u>	<u>6028</u>	<u>6119</u>
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<u>Rough grazings (acres)</u>	<u>92378</u>	<u>93505</u>	<u>93612</u>
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West Sutherland (Durness, Eddrachillis and Assynt parishes)

<u>Livestock (numbers)</u>	<u>1938</u>	<u>1945</u>	<u>1950</u>
Dairy cattle	978	994	932
Beef cattle	220	475	358
Horses	252	197	152
Sheep	56447	72002	70370
Pigs	24	6	57
Poultry	8016	11241	12917

Crops (acres)

Barley	13	1	5
Oats	629	450	392
Potatoes	242	156	147
Turnips	70	60	53
Rotation grasses	561	529	440
<u>Permanent grasses</u>	<u>1211</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>2089</u>

<u>Total crops and grass</u>	<u>2726</u>	<u>3178</u>	<u>3126</u>
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<u>Rough grazings (acres)</u>	<u>274254</u>	<u>337975</u>	<u>284719</u>
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The above statistics represent totals for all agricultural land whether on the farms, the crofting townships or on grazed deer forest. In West Lewis, since the War, the percentage of land under crops and grass has risen to 6; the increase has been in the grass acreage. The remaining 94 per cent of the land area is under rough grazing of poor quality. In West Sutherland the increase in the crops and grass acreage is less than for Lewis and even in 1945 the percentage area under such land use was only 0.8. The rough grazing acreage averages about 75, the remainder of the area being either deer forest or waste land or a small area of woodland; none of it is agricultural land. Moreover, the distribution of the arable land in West Sutherland is very uneven with most of it on the farms, thus it is impossible to deduce general trends from such small totals.

However, as far as the grazing lands are concerned, changes in land utilization and the numbers of stock bear a close relationship to economic factors since the Government assistance available for these regions is directed towards improving pastoral farming. For example, since the introduction of the sheep subsidy during the War, the number of sheep has increased in both areas since 1938. (The decrease recorded in West Sutherland between 1945 and 1950 was due to the heavy losses of the severe winter of 1947). The improvement schemes for grazing lands have increased the

grass acreage in both regions and although the total number of cattle has not increased in Lewis the crofters are now able to keep purer dairy strains than formerly and thus intensify the production of domestic dairy requirements.

On the whole, therefore, it may be said that there is a concerted and successful effort towards the improvement of the grazing lands for the livestock which are the mainstay of the agriculture of both regions.

(b) Crofting

20 Crofting, which is confined to the remote parts of the Highlands of Scotland, is the nearest approach to subsistence agriculture that remains in Britain. It is essentially small scale stock rearing and, although each holding has its own arable land and a small amount of outrun, the grazing land is held in common. The unit of settlement is the township which is a rural community consisting of a group of small holdings, together with their common grazing land. The townships may be grouped, scattered or linear in shape. According to the Small Landholders' (Scotland) Acts, a croft holding is one which is less than 50 acres in extent or which is rented at less than £50. In different parts of the crofting areas the holdings vary greatly in size and the working of the crofts varies also, according to the amount and quality of the land available, to local variations in climate and relief, and to the geographical location of the region. The arable land of a croft is now

almost always held individually but it may consist of scattered patches or rigs which may or may not be fenced. A modified form of runrig persists in the Outer Hebrides
 64 for allotting strips of machair land for the cultivation of potatoes in special 'pendicles'. The common grazing land is used jointly by all who pay rent for their land and this rent also entitles the crofter to cut peat from the moor and to collect seaweed for manure. The souming, i.e. the amount of stock to be grazed upon the common pasture, is laid down by the Scottish Land Court; its enforcement is the work of the local grazing committees which are also responsible for regulating the use of the grazings and for organising communal activities such as dipping and clipping etc. Adjacent common grazing lands are usually fenced from each other and in most cases the grazing land of a township is fenced from the crofts (i.e. the arable land).

West Lewis

Practically all the 37 crowded coastal townships of West Lewis are situated between the sea and the main road which forms the boundary between the crofts and the open moor. The average number of holdings per township is 38 and of persons per holding, 5. Thus there is a dense rural population in this small settled area and as most of the townships are linear in shape they often present a continuously settled area for several miles. This is

especially true in Ness which has the appearance of an urban rather than of a rural area.

65,66 Although all the crofters of West Lewis are agricultural subjects none of them derives an adequate income from the land and some supplementary source of income is essential. Moreover, in addition to the crofters, there are also squatters and cottars who pay no rent to the estate and who are landless members of the community. The cottars usually live on subdivided crofts and for long the cottar problem in Lewis has been a serious one as the constant subdivision of the holdings has accentuated the congestion on an already densely settled rural area. Some cottars pay rents for their house sites but many also put stock upon the grazings and cultivate small patches of land, neither of which they are legally entitled to do. The squatters have settled on the common grazing land; they likewise have no rights to engage in agricultural pursuits. Some of them, however, have legalised their position with regard to house sites by taking out feus.

The crofting townships of West Lewis, with the exception of the Carloway district where the broken nature of the surface makes a more scattered settlement pattern inevitable, are linear in shape and extend along the township roads which are either parallel to or at right angles to the main road. The croft houses are situated at the road sides. The townships extend from the coast to the open moorland;

some, as in Ness and at Barvas, have a stretch of sandy machair land, but many have been reclaimed from the moor by first "skinning" the peat for fuel which exposes the bare boulder clay beneath. The original townships were arranged in linear fashion in order to provide as wide a range of soil types as possible and, as many of these have been subdivided, they are frequently very long and very narrow in shape. Newer settlements may be entirely on the "skinned land" as at Cross-Skigersta, or all on peat, as at New Shawbost. Each township is surrounded by a dyke or fence and, although an increasingly large number of individual crofts are being enclosed, the continual presence of so many open crofts is a serious handicap to agricultural improve:
ments. The relatively regular distribution of the town:
 :ships is a reflection of the uniform nature of the terrain:
 it was nowhere possible to provide shelter for man's
 dwellings nor for his stock.

The individual crofts are mostly long narrow strips seldom exceeding 10 acres while most are very much smaller than this. A 10 acre croft might possess 4 or 5 acres of arable land, the rest being outrun. Such a holding, where the souming was 1 cow, 1 two year old stot or heifer and 7 blackfaced sheep per £1 rent, might support 2 cows and followers, 1 horse, 40 sheep and say, 15 or 20 hens. (1 horse will be reckoned as 8 sheep and 1 cow as 5 sheep for souming purposes). The rent of such a holding would be

about £4:10/- per annum. A more usual size of holding in West Lewis would be one of 4 acres with 3 acres of arable and 1 of outrun. This holding could only support 1 cow, 20 sheep and some poultry; its rent would be about £2. In both cases the crops grown would be oats, hay and potatoes. Such holdings are obviously much too small, especially under present day conditions, to support a family.

In Ness the land is flat and the soil is fertile due to the shelly boulder clay but elsewhere there may be huge boulders as at Barvas, large expanses of wet peat or extensive outcrops of bare rock; all these types of surface give land of low productive capacity which is apt to support only indifferent agricultural practices. The arable land of the Lewis crofts is cultivated by a horse plough or by a hired tractor (often from the Department of Agriculture). The manures used are farmyard manures, artificial fertilizers and seaweed: (very little seaweed is used in Lewis today except on the machair land). Supplies of farmyard manure are inadequate owing to the decline in the cattle population and therefore more and more dependence is placed on the use of artificials. The usual crops are grown and all are for feeding to stock with the exception of potatoes. Barley was once a very important crop for human consumption, especially in Ness, where some is still grown and ground into meal at the old water driven mill at Dell. Where grass seed is sown for hay the land must be fenced and now in all

the best worked townships progressively more fencing is being carried out and tethering and herding of animals is becoming less necessary.

The produce of the croft provides domestic requirements of dairy produce and winter feeding stuffs for the animals but no livestock or livestock products are exported from Lewis. The dairy cows, often of the Ayrshire or Jersey breeds or crosses, are kept for domestic use exclusively and there is not even a sufficient surplus of milk in the rural areas to supply the town of Stornoway. The calves are sold to dealers or are reared at home and fatstock are sold in Stornoway in autumn. Frequently the bulls used belong to the two farms in the area, otherwise they are the property of the Department of Agriculture. Sheep, of the small Island Black Faced breed, are kept for meat and wool but neither are exported from the island. The lambs are kept each year, the ewe lambs for breeding purposes and the wethers until about three years old when they are sold for meat. Each crofter keeps a few hens: they are a useful source of food and although there is no organised export of eggs or poultry (Lewis does not come within the egg scheme) a large trade is carried on independently. Pigs are now being fattened on several of the crofts although there is no pig breeding in the island. The shortage of food and the continuance of rationing have helped to diminish the superstitious unpopularity of these animals in the crofting

districts.

67

The common grazing land consists of poor hill grazing and in Ness and at Barvas, a limited amount of sandy machair land. In some areas, the sheilings are still used in early summer. The Barvas sheilings are situated beside the main road on the moor between Barvas and Stornoway and when the cattle are brought back from the sheilings they are taken to the machair on a specified date. The crofters travel to and from the sheilings by bus. In a well organised township, such as Lower Barvas, the soumings are enforced as closely as possible in order to prevent the grazings being overstocked but elsewhere, especially in overcrowded Ness, the common grazings are often seriously overstocked to the detriment of pastures and animals alike. In Lower Barvas, a part of the machair is fenced off, as a township activity, for potato cultivation: similar communal activities are land drainage, the gathering of sheep, the purchasing of seeds and fertilizers, and the spraying of potatoes. Experiments for improving parts of the common grazing lands at Lower Barvas and North Bragar, utilising aid available under the Marginal Production and Hill Farming Act schemes, are being directed by the County Organiser for Lewis. The 20 acres of improved grazings at Barvas are now being used for wintering lambs. A similar experiment was begun in Ness in 1951.

West Sutherland

68 In West Sutherland there are 52 crofting townships
69 containing 594 small holdings. The average number of
70 holdings per township is 11 and of persons per holding 3.
As in Lewis, it is impossible to make a living from a single
holding therefore either some supplementary employment is
required or the tenants must work more than one holding.
The latter practice is common in West Sutherland and in each
parish the number of holdings exceeds the number of tenants.
When one tenant rents two or even three holdings he may
cultivate only one of them or only the best patches on each.
In some cases he uses all his land exclusively for grazing.
This is most likely to occur in a township with extensive
common grazings or with good enlargements or where crofters
can rent additional grazing land from an adjoining farm or
deer forest. Thus, in effect, many crofts are really small
pastoral farms concentrating on the rearing of Cheviot sheep
but with an increasing emphasis on hill cattle. When a
croft is sublet to a neighbour for grazing only (a common
practice when the croft house is used as a holiday cottage)
the arable land is often allowed to deteriorate with
detrimental effects on the whole township.

The townships are small and scattered compared to
those of West Lewis; some are isolated with scattered
holdings while others are linear in form or grouped.
Several townships may adjoin and use one common grazing

land as in Lewis but in Sutherland the townships are small and the grazings extensive. The distribution of the townships in Sutherland was determined less by geographical factors than in Lewis although these controls are really more limiting on the mainland than in the island region. It was the Clearances of the nineteenth century that forced the settlement of many inhospitable stretches of the West Sutherland coast and these areas today are the main regions of crofter settlement here.

Crofting practices in these three parishes differ considerably from those in Lewis. The rocky nature of the terrain and the steep slopes severely restrict the arable acreage while the heavier autumnal precipitation and higher humidity make harvesting a hazardous operation. Good soils are found on the outcrops of the Durness Limestone but elsewhere the only reasonably good soils are on the blown sands, as in the Oldshore district, but they are often too dry and are seriously deficient in humus and in cobalt. The arable patches are often very small and may not be contiguous, as in Oldshore, but in Durness the crofts are
68 laid out in strips and each one is individually fenced. The crops of hay, oats and some turnips are grown only for feeding to livestock but potatoes are grown for human consumption. Small vegetable plots are found on most holdings and where some shelter is available a few flowers

and small fruits may also be grown. Wherever possible tractor cultivation is in use and the number of horses is declining. As in Lewis the fertilizers used are farmyard manure and artificials but very little seaweed is now used in this region.

It is the grazing lands, however, which are all important to the West Sutherland crofter and most townships have an abundance of good summer grazing land. Cheviot sheep are the main source of cash income but the lack of arable land and of adequate enclosures means that the ewe hoggs must be wintered on the crofts and that the ewes must be brought down from the hills for lambing. Flocks of 50 or more sheep per holding are not uncommon. The management of sheep stocks varies in different parts of the region.

68

Most flocks are individually owned but in Durness many crofters also have a share in the club sheep stock of Keoldale farm. In Durness too, the townships all share the same large grazing and employ two full time shepherds to tend their flocks. At Achriesgill in Eddrachillis the township's sheep are managed on^{as} a hirsal of a sheep farm.

70

69

In the sandy areas of Stoer in Assynt a number of Blackfaced sheep are kept.

The cattle kept on the crofts are mainly Aberdeen Angus or Aberdeen Angus crossed with Shorthorn. Bulls are usually supplied by the Department of Agriculture or from the neighbouring farms which may also sell heifer calves to the

crofters for replacements of dairy stock. The crofters' calves are sold in Dingwall at an early age but the calf subsidy has encouraged some people to keep them longer. The difficulty of providing winter feeding stuffs restricts the increase of all-the-year-round cattle but in some years the crofters in Scourie buy in young cattle and summer them on the hill grazing very successfully. One or two cows are kept on most crofts but the district is not self supporting for milk and in winter it is often scarce. In Scourie all the cattle are attested and there are indications that this practice will spread throughout the region.

As in Lewis, eggs and poultry are sold outside the district by individuals but a more closely integrated industry would doubtless be more remunerative than the prevailing system. Some crofters also fatten pigs but the dimensions of this activity are very small.

There is great variation in the size, quality and value of the crofts in West Sutherland thus it is impossible to instance an average holding. The poorest township is undoubtedly Laid on the west shore of Loch Eriboll. There the crofts are on the Cambrian Quartzite and cultivation is virtually impossible; the rents are less than £2 per annum.

At Elphin and Knockan, on the other hand, the Durness Limestone provides good arable land and excellent grazing, which enable the crofters to keep considerable flocks of sheep. The rents in those townships average between £5

and £7 per annum.

Examples are given below of representative townships
from the three parishes.

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Township</u>	<u>Number Holdings</u>	<u>Common Grazings</u>	<u>Souming</u>
DURNESS	Durine)	64	7000 acres between all Durness townships.	11 sheep per £1 rent (1 cow = 5 sheep) (1 horse = 7 ")
	Achines)			
	Balvolich)			
	Lerin)			
	Smoo)			
	Sangomore)			
	Sangobeg)			
EDDRA: : CHILLIS	Badcall.)	46	6500 acres between all 3 townships	1 cow & 6 sheep per £1 rent (1 cow = 5 sheep) 1 horse = 7 ")
	Scourie.)			
	Scourie:)			
	:more.)			
	Scourie)			
	village			
	Foindle:)	6	835 acres	12 ewes per £1 old rent
	:more			
ASSYNT	Nedd	16	Township Grazing 811 acres	20 sheep per share
			Enlarge: :ment	10 " "
			434 ÷ 13	
	Knockan)	38	3534 acres Township grazing	46 sheep per share
	Elphin)			
)			
)			
)			
)			
)			
)			
)			
)			
)			
)			
)			
)			
)			
			Enlargement with Elphin 880 ÷ 35	60 " "
			3613 acres Township Grazing	60 " "
			Enlarge: :ment 280	10 " "
			Enlarge: :ment with Knockan 880 ÷ 35	60 " "

(c) Sheep Farming

Sheep farming is still of major importance in West Sutherland but in West Lewis only vestiges of former farms remain.

West Sutherland

46 The introduction of Cheviot sheep into Sutherland in
the early nineteenth century was the dominant factor in the
economic history of the county. At present the few vast
hill sheep farms in West Sutherland cover approximately one
quarter of the surface area. The largest sheep farms
68 average 25000 acres in extent and are all in Durness parish
viz. Balnakeil, Eriboll and Keoldale. Eriboll and Keoldale
were both purchased by the Board of Agriculture after the
first world war but Eriboll was resold later and is now
once more a privately owned sheep farm. Keoldale is still
the property of the Department of Agriculture, it is
administered by a secretary and worked under a farm manager.
The stock is a club sheep stock, the property of 43 share:
:holders (who also have small holdings of their own) in
Durness. Balnakeil has for long been one of the best large
farms in the north of Scotland, and it has a considerable
amount of arable land, unlike Stronechrubie in Assynt, which
69 is exclusively a grazing farm. The other sheep farms are
much smaller in extent but the amount of stock, both sheep
and cattle, now grazed on the deer forest land increases every
year. This practice is much encouraged by Government

assistance made available since the war.

The hill pastures in Sutherland contain much green land and relatively small areas of heather moor, hence they are well suited for Cheviot sheep which greatly outnumber those of the Blackfaced breed. On the largest farms flocks of up to 5000 sheep are kept. The hirsell is the unit of management on these farms, each hirsell usually being the responsibility of one shepherd. The great sheep farms on the Durness Limestone are highly favoured by the rich pastures and the good arable land which this outcrop affords. Elsewhere exclusive grazing by sheep for over a century has led to much serious impoverishment of the pastures and on all farms there is now a concerted effort to increase the numbers of hill cattle kept, especially in summer time. Where there is arable land the crops grown are still only for feeding to stock. Balnakeil has the best arable land which enables the farm to support a herd of pedigree beef cattle in addition to its large sheep stock and small dairy herd.

As Sutherland is essentially a breeding and a rearing county, the main source of income from the sheep farms is the sale of wether lambs which takes place at Lairg in August. Most of the ewe lambs are retained for breeding purposes and at 5 or 6 years of age the cast ewes are sold for further use on lowland farms. The majority of the stock is wintered on the open hill but rams and ewe hoggs require hand feeding and some are still sent to the east coast for this purpose -

a practice which is becoming prohibitively expensive.

Several of the sheep farms, as well as a number of the crofting townships, are carrying out improvements under the Hill Farming Act of 1946 and all make use of the grants available for marginal land.

West Lewis

In West Lewis there is now only one small farm, the Mill Farm at Dell in Ness. This farm is approximately 120 acres in extent with 20 acres of arable land consisting of relatively large level fields suitable for ploughing with a tractor. The crops are the usual ones, but sheep are the mainstay of the farm. 90 Cheviot ewes are kept at Dell while 140 are grazed on the remote island of North Rona which is rented by the farmer for this purpose. About 10 cross Ayrshire and Black Polled cattle are kept and a pedigree Aberdeen Angus bull.

Barvas Glebe is also used for grazing sheep of the Blackfaced breed, and about 20 head of cattle. Formerly the sheep farm at Galson supported a flock of 1500 Blackfaced sheep. Its grazing lands, however, were very inferior to those of the Sutherland farms but the usual hill practices of selling off wether lambs and cast ewes were observed.

2. FORESTRY

West Sutherland

11

There is abundant evidence that there were once many more trees in West Sutherland than there are today. Nevertheless there are still small natural woodlands in sheltered hollows, especially in Assynt and Eddrachillis. In the latter, afforestation is now taking place around Loch More under a scheme inaugurated by the proprietor in 1949. The slopes are being planted with hybrid larch, Sitka spruce and Norway spruce from the loch side to a height of 750 ft. This scheme, which employs about 80 local men is providing valuable part time employment for the crofters of Durness, Kinlochbervie and Scourie and, it is claimed, has arrested depopulation from this region. There are older plantations of coniferous trees, all privately owned, at Culag, Lochinver and at Hope in Durness parish.

West Lewis

71

West Lewis is completely treeless. Shelter belts have frequently been advocated for all parts of Lewis but as yet no decision has been reached as to which trees would be most suitable for this purpose and none have yet been planted. The Forestry Commission attempted a small plantation of coniferous trees in Glen Valtos, Uig, after the First World War, but the trees remained very small and stunted and the experiment was not considered a success.

3. SPORT

4 The mountains, moors and rivers of West Sutherland
 have been renowned for the excellence of their sport for many
 7
 72 centuries. The mountains contain great deer forests, the
 moors provide rough shooting and fishing and the rivers
 abound in salmon and trout. The Reay Forest Estate in
 Eddrachillis, the property of the Duke of Westminster, is the
 largest sporting property in the region and is one of the
 finest in Scotland. Other areas devoted largely to sport
 are large areas in Assynt parish, and the high mountain areas
 of all three parishes. There are shooting lodges at
 Gualinand Gobernuisgach in Durness, at Glen Canisp, Kylestrone,
 Inchnadamph and Loch Assynt in Assynt parish and also at
 Scourie in Eddrachillis. Hotels, which cater for visiting
 sportsmen, are located at Lochinver, Inchnadamph, Kylesku,
 and Drumbeg in Assynt, at Scourie and Kinlochbervie in
 Eddrachillis and at Keoldale in Durness. Altogether, 181,000
 acres are under deer forest in West Sutherland but little of
 this land is of any use for agriculture although where possible
 some sheep and cattle are grazed there in summer.

54 The Royal Commission of 1892 (Deer Forest Commission)
 could only recommend the allocation of a small proportion
 of the deer forest for use by the crofters. Similarly in
 73 1921 when a report was published following another enquiry,
 it was shown that very little of the deer forest in Sutherland

was suitable for any other purpose and at best it could only carry a light summer stock. The report recommended that silviculture could be undertaken on the deer forests, and the afforestation work now in progress on the Reay Forest Estate supports the validity of this suggestion.

The sporting estates do not provide much full time employment but those who are so employed obtain fixed wages and good houses and they are spared the economic uncertainties which are the crofters' lot. Sport also provides part time employment for the crofters and their families as gillies and as domestic workers. During the inter-war years these were important sources of income in this region. Moreover, as the sporting land is non agricultural, it is heavily rated and thus provides a valuable source of revenue to the County Exchequer.

West Lewis

In West Lewis, there is a little rough shooting and some salmon fishing at Barvas but as a source of revenue to the crofter or to the County Council, the contribution from sport is nil.

VIII. FISHING

Sutherland and Lewis, bordering the Minch, have access to one of the richest fishing grounds in Britain. In Lewis fishing is an old established industry. In Sutherland, on the other hand, the coastal areas had few inhabitants before
 41 the Clearances but afterwards the evicted tenants were
obliged to fish although they were unaccustomed to it and
 24 they had to contend with a dangerous coast, a lack of boats
and gear, with few harbours and poor piers.

At the end of the nineteenth century, although large scale commercial fishing was being concentrated into the major ports, there was still a large number of small boats all around the coast of N.Scotland, and fishing was, and still is, an important part-time occupation in crofting districts. Today lobster fishing is the most reliable and remunerative branch of the industry, white fishing has been reduced to a small scale local enterprise and a very few areas still participate in the herring fishing trade.

West Lewis

At the end of the nineteenth century Ness and Carloway were the principal fishing stations and the only harbours in West Lewis but all the western townships had a few small boats which were used to catch white fish with great lines. Some lobster fishing was carried on and many people were also employed in the Stornoway herring fishing.

At this time two important schemes were prepared to assist the fishing industry in Lewis in an attempt to relieve the distress prevailing in the island. Both schemes were for West Lewis; they were the Ness Harbour project and the Pentland Road from Carloway to Stornoway.

The Ness Harbour project received a grant from the Fishery Board because much fish was landed there and a pier and harbour were badly needed. Between 1883 and 1886 the
74 Fishery Board paid over £4300; between 1891 and 1894 it spent a further £3700 and a loan of £2000 was obtained from the Public Works Loan Commissioners. In 1895 money was
75 obtained under the West Highlands and Islands Works Acts and in 1899 from the Congested Districts Board. Later, large sums of money were obtained for a breakwater to protect the entrance on the north east side. The total expenditure for the harbour and breakwater amounted to £25,536, but in spite of all this the harbour silted badly after every gale and has never been suitable for large boats. The construction of the harbour was inefficiently handled from the start due to the multiplication of authorities handling the matter.

76 A report on the condition of the harbour was made in 1903 in which the engineer criticised the construction work done by local contractors and stated that without the provision of a steel caisson with large sluices the harbour would soon become silted to the point of uselessness. This forecast proved very accurate and today the harbour can only be used

by small boats at high tide.

75 The Pentland road from Carloway to Stornoway was built as a substitute for the railroad recommended by the Walpole Commission, for the rapid transport of white fish between Carloway and Stornoway. In 1891 a grant of £15,000 was received under the West Highlands and Islands Works Act but by 1898 only one half of the road had been completed and all but £1485 of the grant had been spent. The Congested Districts Board provided £500 in 1902 and a further £8,000 in 1910 but the road (at a total cost of £23,500) was not completed until the early 1920's by which time it had outlived its purpose, since commercial white fishing on the west coast had virtually ceased by then. The road has since fallen into disrepair and, except as a peat road, it is never used today.

74 Since the end of the First World War the most important schemes for the commercialisation of fishing in Lewis were those of Lord Leverhulme. Unfortunately, his plans for establishing fish canneries and packing stations had to be abandoned in 1922. The Herring Industry Board, established in 1935, tried to give more security to the herring fishermen but this industry is now in a depressed condition and none of the inhabitants of West Lewis is now employed in the Stornoway herring fishing.

Altogether only 80 men are now engaged in fishing in West Lewis and, except at Port of Ness where there is a little

commercial fishing for local disposal, the small catches of white fish are for domestic use only. All the boats used are under 18' keel in length and are driven by small motor engines. In 1950 the total landings amounted to only 405 cwts., valued at £739.

<u>Creeks</u>	<u>Number of Boats</u> <u>1950</u>
Skigersta	2
Port of Ness	15
Borve	2
Barvas, Brue, Arnol	2
Bragar	5
Shawbost	3
Carloway	13

Lobster fishing is very important in some parts of Lewis, particularly in the island of Bernera, but along the coast of West Lewis it is only pursued at Carloway. Salmon fishing is confined to the Barvas river but its scope is very limited.

West Sutherland

74 At the end of the nineteenth century commercial fishing in West Sutherland was on a very small scale with Loch Clash as the main centre for herring fishing and curing. Fish cured at Loch Clash was often exported to the Baltic countries via Stornoway and that from Lochinver was sent away from Leith. The Duke of Sutherland gave money to improve the pier at Portnancon, Loch Eriboll and an attempt was made to open a curing station there. This met with no success and the local fishing industry was seriously handicapped

by inaccessibility and by the great distance from a market.

74 From time to time commercial salmon fishing had been carried out at the mouths of some of the Sutherland rivers and around the coasts. Stations have existed at Badcall-Scourie, Keoldale, Durness, at Sandwood and at Clachtoll-Stoer. The latter is the only one which is still in operation.

In West Sutherland there have been few changes in the fishing industry within the present century. The salmon netting station at Badcall has not been used for many years, herring have only been landed in the sea lochs at infrequent intervals, few crofters now have boats even to fish for themselves and those who have fish lobsters for despatch to the south. Tarbet, Scourie is the most important lobster fishing township. Since the end of the Second World War, however, one important development has taken place, namely the establishment of a small fishing port at Loch Clash, Kinlochbervie. From 1948 until the price of fish was decontrolled in April 1950, large catches
70 of first quality white fish were landed at Loch Clash by small seine net boats from the Moray Firth. A flourishing industry began to develop on a small scale but its prosperity is unlikely to survive in the face of competition with the east coast ports now that heavy transport costs must again enter into the picture.

Fish landed at Loch Clash 1948-1950

<u>Year</u>	<u>Herring</u>		<u>White fish</u>	
	<u>Cwts.</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Cwts.</u>	<u>£</u>
1948	4703	4032	13348	31253
1949	2828	2541	27261	63056
1950 Jan.- July	4500	5798	8414	18088

Lochinver has also increased in importance as a fishing port of recent years. Considerable quantities of herring are landed there from time to time for transport by road to east coast curing stations. Small quantities of white fish are sometimes landed also.

In 1949 there was a proposal to establish a whaling station at Weaver's Bay in Eddrachillis. This scheme has met with fierce opposition and it seems unlikely that it will materialise.

IX. OTHER OCCUPATIONS

1. MINING

West Sutherland

West Sutherland has considerable reserves of mineral wealth in the dolomitic Cambrian limestones of Durness and Assynt. Limestone was worked at Heilam, Loch Eriboll in the mid 19th century when a lime kiln was erected and also a pier for despatching the lime. Marble was once quarried at Ledbeg in Assynt. These limestones were examined thoroughly in 1941 for potential sources of high grade dolomite. The investigation and analyses showed that large quantities of readily accessible high grade dolomite exist near Durness village, along the Kyle of Durness beside Loch Eriboll, near Inchnadamph, and also at Elphin and Knockan in Assynt. The Durness deposits could be transported first by road and then shipped from Loch Eriboll, from Heilam or from Portnancon. The smaller reserves of accessible dolomite from Assynt could go by road to Lairg. The fact that this valuable mineral remains undeveloped is due mainly to the isolation of this region and to the resultant high transport charges.

Moreover, before the minerals could be sent away by sea the old piers would have to undergo major repairs which would be very costly at the present time. The only other workable mineral resource of West Sutherland is feldspar, present in the pegmatites of Beinn Ceannabeine, Durness

and of the Laxford district. This mineral has not yet been worked, however.

Peat is abundant in certain districts but it could not be exploited commercially.

Morainic gravels are used for road mending but no stone is now quarried for building purposes.

West Lewis

15 The main mineral resource of West Lewis is peat which
16 is still cut extensively for fuel. There have been many
peat reclamation and development schemes in Lewis in the
past and in recent years there have been further attempts
to cut peat commercially but these schemes have had no
significant effects in West Lewis.

Clay was once worked in Barvas for rough pottery
and granite was quarried at Dalebeg. No minerals are
worked in this region now and the thickness of the drift
cover makes it difficult even to obtain road metal locally.

2. MANUFACTURING

The locations and natural resources of the two crofting areas under consideration could never make them highly industrialised urban communities. Home industries, however, have for long been an important source of
30 supplementary employment in Lewis but they have never attained any significance in the western parishes of Sutherland where the only non agricultural activities which have ever existed are fishing, quarrying, commerce, gillying and the tourist trade. West Sutherland today has no home industries at all.

The resources available in these regions are wool, water, peat, seaweed, minerals, and fish and in the future there may be limited supplies of timber. Of these resources wool and seaweed are the only raw materials for manufacturing; local supplies of wool gave rise to the very important Harris Tweed Industry but the seaweed resources are limited and their exploitation for industry is unlikely. Today, therefore, there is only one important industry in these regions namely the Harris Tweed Industry in the island of Lewis.

The Harris Tweed Industry

80 The manufacture of Harris Tweed in the Outer Hebrides is unparalleled among the rural industries of twentieth century Britain. In 1947 these islands produced 6 million yards of tweed (valued at £3 million) and still demands exceeded supply. About 60% of the output was exported, mainly to Canada and the U.S.A.

60 The modern development of the Harris Tweed industry dates from the middle of the nineteenth century. By 1890 the Scottish Home Industries Association had established depots at numerous places including Stornoway, Tarbert-Harris and Golspie. A few years later the Congested Districts Board encouraged home industries by giving interest free loans for buying better looms. As a result of this scheme the number of looms in Lewis increased from 55 in 1899 to nearly 300 in 1911. However, while these developments were
81 proceeding the industry was also becoming mechanised. Carding mills were established in Harris and in Stornoway in 1900 and 1903 respectively. Spinning machinery was next installed and in time it became more profitable for crofter workers to confine their operations to weaving, leaving all other processes to be handled by machine. This was particularly true in Lewis and as a result the Scottish Home Industries had to withdraw its depot. In Harris and the southern islands the handmade tweed predominated and in 1911 it became necessary to protect it by a trade mark: this trade

mark defined Harris Tweed as "tweed hand-spun, hand woven and dyed and finished by hand in the islands of Lewis, Harris, Uist, Barra and their several purtenances, and all known as the Outer Hebrides". This had no effect in checking the output of mill spun yarn as the demand for Harris Tweed increased so much in the inter war period that markets were readily found for all tweeds made in the islands. In 1934 the trade mark was revised to allow for the mechanization of the industry and by this new ordinance Harris Tweed was defined as "tweed made from pure virgin wool, produced in
 81 Scotland, spun, dyed and finished in the Outer Hebrides, and hand woven by the islanders at their own homes in the islands of Lewis, Harris, Uist, Barra and their several purtenances, and all known as the Outer Hebrides". Under this definition the only hand process involved is weaving. As the trade mark was a guarantee of origin only, and not of quality, in 1946 it became necessary to stipulate that all tweeds must contain 18 shots to the inch to qualify for the stamp.

In Lewis the industry is now really a factory industry. Spinning, dyeing and finishing are all done at the mills in Stornoway which also finish and sell most of the cloth. Weaving only is done in the crdfting townships where nearly all the weavers are men who work on automatic treadle looms, quite different from the hand looms, used in Harris and Uist. In 1947 over 900 were employed in the Stornoway mills and West Lewis possessed over 1,000 weavers.

Two types of Harris Tweed are manufactured: that bearing the trade mark of the Harris Tweed Association (by far the largest amount) and unstamped tweed. The latter, using mainland spun yarn and sometimes non-Scottish wool may be equal to or superior to the stamped article in quality but this is not necessarily the case and the product is more variable as a rule.

The crofter-weavers may work for the mills on commission or for themselves as small independent producers or for local merchants outside Stornoway. South of Barvas the last mentioned is the most usual practice; there are merchants at Arnol^{and} Bragar and a large concern at Shawbost. In Ness there is also a local merchant but weaving is much less popular here than further south. Supplies of raw wool are not difficult to obtain - both island and mainland wool are used - but weavers had great difficulty in obtaining supplies of spun yarn under the boom conditions which prevailed in 1947. In addition there was difficulty in obtaining a supply of the limited quantity of yarn that was available since supplies were only sent to members of the Weavers' Union which had closed its membership. Weavers provide their own looms at an approximate cost of £100 each (many ex Service men spent their gratuities on these looms) and they may work as long as they wish each day, provided they have an adequate supply of yarn. It is an ideal part time employment for crofters who can work at their own time

and make good use of slack times on the land and spells of bad weather. One disadvantage to the stipulation concerning weaving in the crofters' own homes is that individual weaving sheds may be cold, damp, badly ventilated, poorly lit and unhealthy to work in. Rates of pay in 1947 were 1/11d. per weavers yard (8 ft.) for a two shuttle weave and 1/9d. per yard for a one shuttle weave. At that time, it was easy for a crofter to earn from £6 to £8 per week from weaving although many did not make more than £4. Island wool was uncontrolled in price in 1947 and prices as high as £5 - £7 per stone (24 lbs. per stone of wool) were obtained for it. This figure has dropped appreciably since then and the establishment of the Wool Marketing Board in 1950 will undoubtedly stabilise prices to a considerable extent. During recent years the industry has been crippled by the purchase tax but there are now signs that a slight improvement is taking place.

For a short time after the War knitting by hand and by machine was a remunerative occupation for women but there is no longer a market for this produce.

3. TOURIST TRADE

West Sutherland

West Sutherland has a small and expanding tourist industry which is a valuable source of revenue. There are hotels in the villages and the main sporting centres, there are small boarding houses in Lochinver, Scourie and Burness and there is a small youth hostel at Achmelvich, near Lochinver. Several crofters accommodate visitors in summer time and many more would do so if they had running water in their homes and so could offer better accommodation.

The main drawback to the development of the tourist industry is the isolation of the region and its lack of transport facilities. The extreme distances from the large towns is also a deterring factor to the motorist: for many years his petrol ration was inadequate and now its price is the restricting factor.

West Lewis

West Lewis has few attractions for tourists and there is practically no tourist trade. Visitors are numerous in summer, however, consisting mainly of relations from the Lowlands who combine their summer holidays with helping with peats or with the hay or grain harvest. There are no hotels, boarding houses or youth hostels in West Lewis and as the housing situation is bad, very few crofters could offer accommodation to visitors within their homes. The tourist trade, therefore, does not provide any supplementary employment for the crofters.

X. POPULATION

24 The contrasts in population conditions between the two regions became progressively more marked throughout the nineteenth century (pps.26-53). By 1884 it was already evident that the main problem in Lewis was that of congestion on the land whereas in Sutherland rural depopulation was beginning to cause serious concern.

West Lewis

82 The population of West Lewis showed little change between 1755 and 1801 but throughout the nineteenth century it increased rapidly and continued to increase until 1911 when it attained its maximum of 6,953. (See accompanying figures). Although the population has declined since then the percentage decrease has lessened in the last two decades and by 1947 the total population was 6,070, giving an average density of 37.5 per square mile.^ø In West Lewis as the entire population consists of crofters, cottars, feuars and squatters, except for a few professional and commercial people, this total is remarkably high in relation to the small extent of inhabited land and to the rural status of the inhabitants. Such a population could never be maintained exclusively from the land, consequently

ø The 1951 census figures show a further reduction in the total population.

many crofters have always been part time industrial workers or fishermen or they have gone to sea, served in H.M. Forces or sought permanent employment away from home. In several homes many of the younger members of the family are now away and consequently the proportion of elderly people is high.

A comparison of the population pyramids for 1891 and 1921 for Barvas parish shows that the population structure is less well-balanced than it was, the increase in the percentage of elderly people being particularly significant. The proportion of men between 25 and 45 had declined as this was a period of serious unemployment and, in spite of the efforts of Lord Leverhulme and of the Board of Agriculture to settle ex-Servicemen at home, many were forced to emigrate and the resulting exodus was the greatest that Lewis has ever known.

Emigration statistics on a local basis are not available and it is therefore impossible to give a reasonable estimate of the numbers who have left these regions to make permanent homes overseas.

Distribution of Population in West Lewis
Age Groups 1931 and 1946

<u>Crofting</u> <u>Townships</u>	<u>Over</u> <u>14 yrs.</u>	<u>1931</u> <u>Under</u> <u>14 yrs.</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>Over</u> <u>14 yrs.</u>	<u>1946</u> <u>Under</u> <u>14 yrs.</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Ness region	2004	746	2810	2064	549	2613
Barvas "	1786	627	2413	1734	445	2179
Shawbost "	466	202	668	636	185	821
Carlaway "	689	204	893	592	148	740
<u>TOTAL</u>	5005	1779	6784	5026	1327	6353
<u>Per Cent</u>	74.4	25.6	100	78.9	21.1	100

(In West Lewis the entire population lives in the crofting townships.)

Between 1931 and 1946 the percentage of children of school age decreased. This reduction, however, was due rather to the smaller number of families in the region than to the small size of individual families. In rural Lewis the birth rate has always been slightly higher than in corresponding areas of the mainland and it is probable that there has been a slight increase in the number of children in recent years as the immediate post war prosperity in the Harris Tweed industry encouraged many returning Service men to settle in Lewis as weavers. This boom period in the industry, however, has passed and many are once more leaving the island but most of them seek work away from home rather

than emigrating permanently with their families.

Taking the township of Lower Barvas as representative of West Lewis in 1950 its total population was 275, which included 60 children of under 14 years of age (i.e. 22% which is slightly above the figure for West Lewis for 1946). The percentage of unmarried adults (over 16 years) was 40 and the number of people over 65 years of age was 30. Also, in 1950 there was one marriage and 2 deaths. The average number of children per family in the township was 4 and in 1950 there were 4 births. These figures suggest that although the population is ageing its structure is not yet unduly unbalanced.

West Sutherland

West Sutherland has always been a sparsely populated region nevertheless the redistribution of population which resulted from the Clearances led to congestion in the newly established 'eviction' townships, to emigration and to depopulation. However, until 1881, in spite of these factors, the total population of West Sutherland exceeded that of West Lewis, although the population density has always been much lower (see accompanying figures). In West Sutherland the decline in population set in in the middle of the nineteenth century and it has proceeded rapidly ever since. Thus by 1947 the larger of the two regions had an infinitely smaller population (total 2176) and an average density of

only 3.3 per square mile.

West Sutherland, unlike West Lewis, is not exclusively a crofting area although 75% of its population is concentrated into the crofting townships. The remainder live on the sporting estates or the sheep farms or in small villages and tourist centres such as Lochinver, Scourie, Durness, Kinlochbervie and Inchnadamph. Thus, when comparing these two regions from statistical data, it is necessary to bear these differences in mind. Also it is dangerous to draw definite conclusions from such widely differing totals since two or three exceptions to the general rule in West Sutherland, where the totals are so small, could easily appear to upset the general trend.

The population pyramids for West Sutherland show a decrease in the total population since 1891 accompanied by an increasingly unbalanced population structure. The proportion of old people increased greatly, the proportion of men and women in the working age groups decreased alarmingly and consequently there was a serious reduction in the numbers of children.

82 In 1931 the parish of Assynt recorded the highest depopulation rate in Scotland and in 1948 the West Highland Survey showed that Durness and Assynt exhibited the most extreme conditions of depopulation and of ageing within the whole of the West Highland region. By 1951 the total population of West Sutherland had fallen to 2090.

Distribution of Population in the West Sutherland
Parishes 1931 and 1946

<u>Parish</u>	<u>1931</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>1946</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>
	<u>Crofting Town: ships</u>	<u>Other Areas</u>		<u>Crofting Town: ships</u>	<u>Other Areas</u>	
Durness	341	185	526	257	95	352
Eddra: chillis	845	113	958	688	81	769
Assynt	946	367	1313	623	322	945
<u>TOTAL</u>	2132	665	2797	1568	498	2066
<u>% of total</u>	76.2	23.8	100.0	75.9	24.1	100.0

(NOTE:- The figures for 1931 above include permanent residents only and therefore do not correspond exactly to the census figures.)

Distribution of Population in West Sutherland
Age Groups 1931 and 1946

	<u>1931</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>1946</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>
	<u>Over 14 yrs.</u>	<u>Under 14 yrs.</u>		<u>Over 14 yrs.</u>	<u>Under 14 yrs.</u>	
Crofting Townships	1727	405	2132	1283	285	1568
Other Areas	505	160	665	384	114	498
<u>TOTAL</u>	2232	565	2797	1667	399	2066

Distribution of Population in West Sutherland
Age Groups. Per Cent 1931 and 1946

	<u>1931</u>			<u>1946</u>		
	<u>% Over</u>	<u>% Under</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>% Over</u>	<u>% Under</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
	<u>14 yrs.</u>	<u>14 yrs.</u>		<u>14 yrs.</u>	<u>14 yrs.</u>	
% Crofting Townships	81	19	100	82	18	100
Other Areas	76	24	100	77	23	100
<u>% of Total</u>	79.8	20.2	100	80.7	19.3	100

The distribution of population between the crofting townships and the other areas shows little difference between 1931 and 1946. The distribution by age groups, however, shows that the non-crofting areas have a higher proportion of young people than the crofting townships. This is undoubtedly due to economic conditions, since a shepherd or keeper or a tradesman who has a regular wage and often a house provided for him is in a better position to support a family than a crofter whose holding provides little more than an inexpensive home, and a small amount of produce. The rural non-crofting areas of West Sutherland, however, are so small and scattered and often so isolated that they have their own inherent problems especially of transport and education. In the crofting townships in many cases depopulation has proceeded to such an extent that numerous households now consist of an elderly father and his daughter or of a brother and sister living on in the old home. When they have gone there will be no-one to carry on and

unless people can be attracted back to these areas depopulation will become complete. A good example of such a depopulated township is that of Clashnessie in the Stoer district of Assynt. Here, in 1947, out of a total population of 23 there were 7 bachelors of over 50 years of age, and only one married couple and their one child. The bachelors either lived alone or with spinster or widowed sisters. A more encouraging picture fortunately is seen in the Kinlochbervie area of Eddrachillis where, due to the post-war fishing industry established at Loch Clash and now to the afforestation schemes around Loch More, younger people are remaining and even returning to the district. Before 1947 in the Kinlochbervie district there were very few marriages: in 1949 there were 7 and in 1950 there were 11. Correspondingly, the number of births increased from an average of 3 per annum before 1947 to 11 in 1948 and 8 in 1949. In the Stoer district of Assynt, on the other hand, whose total population is comparable to that of Kinlochbervie the average number of births for several years has been only one or two. The county of Sutherland in general has the lowest birth rate of any county in Scotland and it was the only county in Britain in 1931 where deaths exceeded births.

XI. SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

1. TRANSPORT

West Lewis

31 Sir James Matheson developed both the external and the internal communications of Lewis and for a long time he held the mail contract between Ullapool and Stornoway. Ullapool was replaced by Kyle of Lochalsh and Mallaig after the railway had reached these ports and regular steamer services have been in operation now for many years. At one time Stornoway also had a passenger service with Liverpool but this has been discontinued since the end of the First World War. In addition to the daily steamer from Kyle of Lochalsh numerous general and special cargo boats and fishing boats
83 come into Stornoway regularly. Stornoway Harbour has been greatly improved during the last twenty years and in 1946 a new harbour development plan was drawn up whose early erection was recommended by the Highland Advisory Panel. This scheme is now practically completed.

The Outer Hebrides, with their flat land and wide beaches have facilities for air transport which the mountainous parts of the Highlands do not possess. A regular air service linking Glasgow and Inverness with the Outer Islands has been in existence since just before the War. It makes it possible to travel from Stornoway to Glasgow in two hours instead of

twelve, it provides an easy and comfortable journey - a great boon to the sick and the elderly - and it enables the island to receive its mail and its newspapers much more promptly than many parts of the mainland.

60 Internal transport, however, is less good as all the island's traffic must be carried on the roads which are generally well below mainland standards. Road making proper began in 1791. The first road constructed in Lewis went from Stornoway to Barvas; later it was continued northwards to Ness and southwards to Carloway. Thus West Lewis was the first part of the island to be served with roads. As these early roads were intended only for horse and foot traffic and moreover as they were made on foundations of peat, they are now too narrow and undulating and altogether unsuitable for heavy vehicular traffic. The road constructed from Stornoway to Carloway for transporting fish has been mentioned above (the Pentland Road, page 119). Lord Leverhulme proposed building a road from North Tolsta to Skigersta (Ness) so linking up the whole of the north of Lewis by a circular road. This road would have opened up new areas for settlement and would have proved an attraction for tourists. It has often been discussed but is unlikely to materialise.

Today the County Council, with grants from the Ministry of Transport, is responsible for the maintenance of almost all the main roads in Lewis. The District Council is responsible for certain village roads for which grants of 75%

are obtainable from the Department of Agriculture. These roads are repaired by the Highway Authorities and then taken over by the County Council. Lastly, there are peat roads which are the responsibility of the grazing committees. Most of these are only cart tracks and although used by lorries for carting peat, they are quite unsuitable for this purpose.

The maintenance of roads in Lewis is a great financial burden to the County Council and the rates subscribed within the county represent a very small proportion of the total expenditure. Heavy lorries and buses ruin the roads whose narrowness aggravates the sinking over peat but whose widening would be exorbitantly costly. Since 1945 nearly £2½ million has been spent on the roads in Lewis and within the last three years an additional £20,000 has been contributed by the Department of Agriculture.

West Lewis now has a very good bus service with Stornoway and Barvas at the road junction, has a better service than any other village in Lewis. Throughout the island most of the bus services are now amalgamated into companies serving districts. The actual buses are still mostly locally owned and operated and they vary greatly in efficiency, comfort and reliability.

Abortive attempts to establish railways in Lewis began in 1897. All the lines proposed were to be in West Lewis. In 1897 the Highland Railway proposed a line from

Stornoway to Carloway via Breasclete (21 miles in all). The Hebridean Light Railway Company proposed a line from Stornoway to Carloway with a branch line to Breasclete. The schemes were abandoned due to lack of local financial support. Lord Leverhulme included a light railway among his plans for the development of Lewis.

West Sutherland

West Sutherland was the last place on the mainland of Scotland to be served by roads and bridges capable of carrying wheeled traffic. As land transport improved, so the coastal traffic declined and many piers and boatslips have fallen into disuse and disrepair. At the turn of the century several small loans and grants were received (largely from the Congested Districts Board) for improving boatslips and for repairing piers. These were to assist the fishing industry which, however, was never on a sufficiently large scale to warrant heavy expenditure of national funds, as was done in Lewis for the harbour at Ness and for the Carloway road. Lochinver and Loch Clash are the only piers still in regular use but at one time cargo boats from the Clyde, the east coast and the Orkney Islands called at many of the local piers. Orcadian merchants had shops at Rispond and at Scourie and the older residents of Durness remember passengers embarking at Portnancon for Aberdeen. Formerly all non-perishable goods were brought by sea and the crofters laid in stores two or three times a year. Today all transport

is by road, thus the motor roads are of paramount importance as there are no railways, no air services and virtually no steamer services.

In a large and empty county such as Sutherland roads are a very costly item and in 1947 the road rate amounted to 6/- per £ or 23% of the total county rate. In West Sutherland all the roads are very narrow, many are steep and winding, blind corners and switch backs are common and the quality of the surface is highly variable from place to place. Some of the roads, notably the coastal road from Drumbeg to Ullapool, are decidedly dangerous, especially to visiting motorists. All the crofting townships except Ardmore, Loch Laxford, which is reached by a path, are served by roads but some of the shepherds' and keepers' houses are without any proper track and some are most readily accessible by boat.

For many years the main roads have been the responsibility of the County Council, a few local roads are maintained by the District Council, others by grazing committees, or not at all, and some are entirely private. The County Council has recently taken over several former village roads that have been vastly improved within the last few years through grants obtained from the Department of Agriculture. These township roads are now often better than the main roads but work is proceeding on the latter.

The only regular transport on the roads are the mail buses which run daily from Durness, Kinlochbervie, Scourie and Lochinver to Lairg and back. It takes 7 hours to travel from any of these villages to Inverness, the nearest large town. On the remaining roads there is no public transport whatever.

Freight rates over such long land distances are very high and as all goods are now transported by road the isolation of this region is the main difficulty in exploiting its resources to the full and in attempting new development projects.

2. PUBLIC HEALTH

West Lewis

Housing conditions in Lewis have always been worse than in any other rural area in Scotland and they have been the subject of much comment in every official enquiry conducted in the island. For long the typical crofter's house in Lewis was the 'black house' which, until recent years, housed people and cattle under the same roof. The double low thick walls were composed of loose stone, united by a packing of earth or clay, the roof was made of a frame: work of wooden rafters and couples (resting in the inner wall) covered with turf divots and straw, and bound with ropes of heather straw or thatch and weighted down with stones. It was neither airtight nor watertight, it had no window, no chimney and only one door which was used by humans and cattle alike. The byre end of the house was unpaved and in it dung was allowed to accumulate throughout the year. In Spring the dung was removed to manure the land as was the soot encrusted roof. Inside, the houses were filled with smoke from the peat fire that always burned in the middle of the floor. Many of the houses were built back to back and sometimes in rows three deep: they presented a very difficult problem to the sanitary authorities. In 1893 the Lewis District Committee had warned the people that they intended to insist on a complete separation of the byre from

the living room and similar action was taken by the Harris District Committee. Improvements began and continued in Harris but in Lewis the efforts of 1893 were not sustained; indeed, the people were not only refusing to build better houses but were continuing to build the old type. The problem was aggravated by the extreme congestion which prevailed along the west coast where four or five families often lived in one croft, and by the presence of crowds of squatters living in similar wretched hovels. In 1905 the attention of Parliament was drawn to the insanitary condition of the houses in Lewis and officials were sent
58 to investigate. In spite of this investigation little improvement was made and neither the report of the Poor Law
85 Commission in 1909 nor the Dewar Report in 1912 could
86 record any appreciable change. Again in 1917 housing in Lewis was shown to be still very bad^{and} although the Lewis District Committee had attempted to enforce improvement of the housing situation by adopting a set of building bye laws, it had met with little success. Lewis remained the
86 only district in Scotland where cattle housing persisted, the houses were exceedingly bad and grossly insanitary and water supplies were impure and very unsatisfactory. The persistence of these primitive conditions was considered to be largely due to the lack of any informed public opinion.

No real improvements in the housing situation took place until large scale financial assistance was made

available by loans from the Department of Agriculture and by grants from the local authorities under the Housing (Agricultural Population) Scotland Act 1938 and the Housing (Rural Workers) Acts 1926-38. By 1931, however, Lewis still showed the highest degree of over-crowding for any rural district in Scotland with the majority of the people living in two roomed houses.

Lewis 1931

<u>No. of rooms</u>	<u>Houses</u>	<u>Persons</u>
1	171	392
2	2570	10570
3	659	3059
4	1143	5723
5	163	880
6	60	275
7	65	304
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	4831	21203
	<hr/>	<hr/>

60 By the mid 1930s three main types of houses existed in rural Lewis; the black house (with separate byre and living room, small windows and a chimney), the early 'white house' (often very small, cold and damp) and the newer white house (built in accordance with Department of Agriculture stipulations in order to qualify for a loan) with three or four rooms, a scullery, good windows and weatherproof tarred felt roofs. Domestic water supplies in West Lewis are still obtained mainly from shallow wells, sometimes at a considerable distance from the houses. Water distribution schemes have been prepared under the Rural Water Supplies Act

of 1934, but have not yet been implemented. Most of the "feuars" have installed a piped water supply into their houses and several crofters trap rain water and have one inside tap. Many homes in West Lewis had electricity installed in them in 1951.

87

In 1946 a housing survey was made for the County Planning Authorities which described their findings as "truly shocking". Out of 1285 houses surveyed 50% were classed as unfit or over: crowded and of these 119 were black houses. Undoubtedly many crofters were unable to undertake the financial obligations involved in accepting the Department of Agriculture's loans, nevertheless the primitive living conditions were not considered commensurate with present day standards.

The medical services provided for West Lewis under the 1913 scheme were two doctors, one at Borge and one at Carlaway, and district nurses were employed by the County Council. Lewis possesses a general hospital, a fever hospital and a sanatorium in Stornoway, air ambulance services are available to take serious cases to the mainland, specialists consult in Stornoway from time to time and dental treatment can also be obtained. Thus the health services are undoubtedly very good but bad housing, which is thought to be largely responsible for the high incidence of pulmonary tuberculosis also impairs efficient home nursing.

Some new houses have been erected by the County Council within the last few years but crofters are not eligible for

these and the Council often has difficulty in acquiring building sites on the common grazing land.

West Sutherland

88

In Sutherland improvements in housing began as early as 1894 and these were commended in the first report of the Local Government Board.

In some cases proprietors assisted by providing certain materials but all labour was provided by the crofters themselves. Small "white" houses began to replace the old "black" ones and the former usually consisted of two rooms, sometimes with garrets in the roof; they had two chimneys, windows which opened and shut, partitions and ceilings of wood and clay and the roofing was of boards covered with thatch, or felt daubed with tar, or exceptionally of slates. Although very plain and simple these houses were quite separate from the byre and were reasonably light, dry and free from smoke.

86

In 1917 there were only three "black houses" in existence in the whole county of Sutherland and where bad houses did exist the cause was usually real poverty. In many instances crofters had been given assistance to improve their houses, by the Sutherland Estate and sometimes by sporting tenants. The Sutherlandshire houses in 1917 compared favourably with those in Ross-shire or Inverness.

The West Sutherland crofters took full advantage of the financial assistance available for improving their houses

in the 1930s. and although the majority of their houses are still without water, the better housing conditions in general, together with the sparseness of the population, make for a much higher standard of housing than is the general rule in Lewis. Lack of a piped water supply and of sanitation is the worst feature in both places.

In 1931, to take the parish of Assynt as an example,
the majority of the houses were of four rooms, with an average
of three people per house.

Assynt 1931

<u>No. of rooms</u>	<u>Houses</u>	<u>Persons</u>
1	10	11
2	54	132
3	52	155
4	103	381
5	84	304
6	34	153
7	34	158
	—	—
	371	1284
	—	—

Within the last five years the County Council of Sutherland has erected some new houses in all the parishes of West Sutherland but these are for non-crofting members of the community. West Sutherland is not yet served with electricity except where it has been installed privately.

The Highlands and Islands Medical Service operated in Sutherland as in other parts of the Highlands from 1913 until 1947. The sparseness of the population, however, and the isolation of many of the houses made it more difficult and

more costly to operate than in Lewis. There is still a resident doctor in each parish and there are district nurses throughout the region but hospital cases must be taken for long journeys, often on bad roads (the nearest hospital is at Golspie on the east coast) and specialist advice is always far away.

3. EDUCATION

West Lewis

The provision of educational facilities in Lewis is much simpler than in Sutherland on account of the greater density and concentration of its population. Great difficulties were encountered in establishing state education in Lewis after the passing of the 1870 Education Act and without the very generous special grants which were made,
59 it could never have succeeded.

West Lewis has numerous public schools of considerable size and since 1947 there has been some centralising to Shawbost and Lionel, the two junior secondary schools in the region. The whole island is served by the Nicolson Institute in Stornoway, for long the most influential secondary school in the West Highlands and Islands. Lewis also has a technical school which has recently been established at Lewis Castle, Stornoway.

The following table shows that the number of school children has not changed within the last four years:-

Schools in West Lewis

<u>Name of School</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>		<u>Number of Pupils</u>	
	<u>1947</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1947</u>	<u>1951</u>
Lionel (Ness)	8	10	221	249
Cross	5	4	111	107
Galson	2	2	29	24
Shader	5	4	110	96
Barvas	3	3	61	61
Bragar	4	4	109	69
Shawbost	5	7	130	184
Carloway	4	3	75	56
<hr/>				
<u>TOTAL</u>	36	37	836	846

The average number of children per school in 1951 was 106.

Lewis is the main Gaelic speaking region in Scotland today and the island is always well and successfully represented at the local and National Gaelic Mods. Many children cannot speak English when they go to school, and although they must learn it there, they are also encouraged to continue with Gaelic.

The strength of the Gaelic tradition in the islands, however, can in itself be a deterrent to progress by breeding intense parochialism and a narrow insularity. In West Lewis, the small professional element among the population is almost entirely Gaelic speaking and this means in effect

In Barvas parish in 1931, 96% of the population spoke both Gaelic and English.

that almost all the teachers, nurses, ministers and doctors, are Hebrideans. This complete exclusion of outside influences contrasts the villages sharply from Stornoway and must be largely responsible for the extreme conservatism in the former towards change of any kind and to a lack of progress and enterprise in, for instance, housing, agriculture and general community life.

West Sutherland

The situation in West Sutherland is very different from that in Lewis. Each village has its own small school and there are "side schools" for the children of shepherds and estate workers in the isolated glens. Under the Schools (Scotland) Code 1950, however, side schools are to be closed except for those which are to be up-graded to primary status, and the children are to be transferred to other primary schools or to the junior secondary schools which are at Durness, Scourie and Lochinver. This involves providing very costly transport facilities but better educational facilities. The number of pupils has dropped alarmingly in the last few years and several small schools have been closed. Achmelvich school, near Lochinver, which was empty for many years, was opened as a youth hostel in 1949 and has been better patronised in that capacity.

As the bulk of the population lives in the crofting townships around the coast, it would seem that the provision

of small rural schools should not be difficult. However, many of the crofters in these townships are elderly and/or unmarried as there is little work for a family man other than in the transport, tourist or distributive trades. In West Sutherland, therefore, it is not the crofters but rather the shepherds and the estate workers and those engaged in commerce or the professions whose economic situations are most sound and who can best provide for a growing family. Shepherds and keepers, however, often live in extreme isolation; their children cannot be made to walk more than three miles to school, and the provision of transport is often exceedingly difficult. The side school was formerly the only solution - unsatisfactory as it too often was. Because of these difficulties many men with families have been forced to leave the district and to seek employment elsewhere. Many good houses are fast falling into ruins and are never likely to be inhabited again. Thus the great difficulty of providing educational facilities in the remotest places is a primary factor causing rural depopulation from these areas.

Schools in West Sutherland 1950

<u>Parish</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Number of Teachers</u>	<u>Number of Pupils</u>
Durness	Durine	2	32
	Laid (Side)	1	9
Eddrachillis	Oldshore	1	15
	Badcall Inchard	2	25
	Scourie	2	20
	Kylestromie (Side)	1	4
	Fanagmore "	1	6
	Badnabay "	1	3
	Achfary "	1	6
	Kinloch "	1	1
Assynt	Drumbeg	1	10
	Stoer	2	28
	Lochinver	3	45
	Elphin	1	10
	Assynt (Side)	1	10
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		21	224
		<hr/>	<hr/>

The average number of pupils per school is 15 as compared to 106 for West Lewis. Gaelic is widely spoken in West Sutherland and the percentage speaking Gaelic and English in 1931 was 76.

Pupils proceeding to senior secondary schools must leave home at the age of 11 + and stay in Golspie or Dornoch, only returning home for the school holidays. Sutherland Technical School at Golspie is the only residential school in the county. In spite of the bursaries awarded to assist the cost of boarding these children away from home there is very limited hostel accommodation and some parents are unwilling to place such young children in lodgings, which in

any case are difficult to find. The educational problems of the Sutherland County Council are thus exceedingly complex.

4. RELIGION

The North West Highland region is a stronghold of strict sabbatarianism. In both areas three congregations exist, namely, the Church of Scotland, the Free Church (i.e. the "Wee Frees" who did not join with the Church of Scotland in 1929) and a small congregation of a very narrow sect known as the Free Presbyterians. Sometimes all three are represented in one small village. The Church of Scotland has a resident minister in every parish of both Lewis and Sutherland and several missionaries as well. The other churches, however, whose financial resources are very limited, often have great difficulty in providing trained and qualified preachers.

West Lewis

In Lewis the majority of the people left the Established Church at the time of the Disruption in 1843 and joined the Free Church. In West Lewis today the "Wee Frees" outnumber the members of the Church of Scotland and there is a small congregation of Free Presbyterians in Ness.

89 The sabbath in Lewis has been graphically described by A.A. Macgregor in his recent book on the Western Isles. The Church services in West Lewis are almost always in Gaelic, unless English is specially requested for a stranger; they are also long and very simple, and the singing is unaccompanied. Religious services are also held during

the week, and the communions occupy four whole days.

West Sutherland

The Church of Scotland has most adherents in West Sutherland but there are "Wee Frees" and Free Presbyterians also, especially in Stoer, Lochinver, Scourie and Loch Inchard.

5. SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY LIFE

West Lewis

In West Lewis there is no lack of social life for the inhabitants, especially for the younger folk. The proximity to Stornoway, however, with its cinema, dances, concerts and public houses has given some of the younger rural dwellers a taste for "town" life. This is especially noticeable in Ness, in spite of its considerable distance from Stornoway, and has been made possible throughout this region by the good bus services which are now available.

In the townships the success of the organised social activities is generally proportional to the initiative of a few enterprising people and inversely proportional to the strength of the narrowest religious sects. On more than one occasion when sports clubs, dramatic societies, concert parties or youth clubs have been flourishing concerns, a "religious revival" has swept through the village "converting" the people thereby causing a disruption of all these organised social activities by condemning harmless amusements. The local communions which occupy four days in each district - are the great social occasions in the Lews when the people foregather from all over the island. Apart from religious services few activities are organised by the churches with the exception of the Sunday Schools and the Women's Guild in the Church of Scotland.

Wherever there is a suitable meeting place the young people congregate in winter to play badminton or to have dances and concerts and many villages have youth clubs and branches of the A.C.F. Football is the favourite sport and it is played in summer; the best pitches are on the machair shore. The older people prefer to 'ceillidh' in winter time, quietly and informally among themselves; they sit and talk, they drink tea and gossip and sometimes they sing and recount the old tales of the isles - all in their native Gaelic. The married women have little social life and often even the younger ones are not expected to take an active part in village life. It is surprising that in the whole of West Lewis there is not one branch of the Scottish Women's Rural Institute which is such a flourishing concern in most of rural Scotland. The housewife's status is more that of a peasant woman than of a partner in a modern home.

West Sutherland

A significant difference between the two regions is that West Sutherland has no access to a town hence some of its settlements must assume certain urban functions and each community is responsible for its own social life. Social life, however, in such a sparsely populated rural district is very full, in spite of the many difficulties which exist. In West Sutherland, lack of numbers is the worst of these and often makes it difficult to find enough members for teams and

to maintain local branches of national organisations. Nevertheless scouts, guides, the W.R.I., and the British Legion are all represented wherever possible and there are dramatic societies, youth clubs, badminton and football clubs, Highland Gathering Committees, choirs and even rifle clubs. Lochinver and Durness are amazingly self-contained, the latter even having its own dance band. The films have also reached these remote places and throughout the winter each district has at least two film shows a month.

In addition to the organised social activities there is a great deal of informal entertaining. Highland hospitality in these regions is by no means dead.

D. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

XII. SUMMARY

I. SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION

West Lewis

A congested rural area.
Population density 37.5
per sq.mile.
Exclusively a crofting
district.

West Sutherland

An area of rural
depopulation.
Population density 3.3
per sq.mile.
Settlements include
crofting townships,
sheep farms, sporting
estates and small villages.

II. THE AREAS CONCERNED

West Lewis

Location & extent

Island.
N.W.extremity of Outer
Hebrides.
Latitude $58^{\circ}19'N$ -
 $58^{\circ}31'N$.
County, Ross & Cromarty.
Parishes - Barvas &
North Uig
Area approx.160 sq.miles.

Accessibility

Air to Stornoway) thence
Sea to Stornoway) thence
Bus from Stornoway to
West Lewis.

Minimum time taken from
Inverness $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours

West Sutherland

Location & extent

Mainland.
N.W.extremity of Scottish
mainland.
Latitude $58^{\circ}0'N$ -
 $58^{\circ}37'N$.
County, Sutherland.
Parishes - Durness, Eadra:
:chillis, & Assynt.
Area approx. 600 sq.miles.

Accessibility

No air transport.
No sea transport.
Rail to Lairg thence
mail buses to West
Sutherland.

Minimum time taken from
Inverness 7 hours.

Land ownership

Macleods the earliest possessors.

17th century colonisation from Fife unsuccessful.

From 17th century proprietors were Seaforth's, Mathesons, Lord Leverhulme.

1922 Lewis sold & broken up into many estates.

Today region contains several estates, mostly the property of limited companies.

Land ownership

Military chieftains the ancestors of Reay and Sutherland clans.

No attempted colonisation from the south.

From 17th century proprietors were Reay & Sutherland families in Durness & Eddrachillis; Macleods & Seaforth's in Assynt.

19th Century, all 3 parishes the property of Sutherland's lands.

20th century, many estates broken up.

Today many estates of varying sizes in the region, also large & some smaller farms. Most estates privately owned.

III. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTWest Lewis
Relief

Flat or undulating low moorland.

Slopes gentle, relief monotonous.

Mostly below 400'.

Geological formations

Pre-Cambrian.

Lewisian Gneiss the predominant rock throughout.

West Sutherland
Relief

Essentially a highland region.

Steep slopes, high mountains, very rugged relief.

Mostly above 500' with mountains up to 3000'.

Geological formations

Pre-Cambrian formations

divided by N-S Moine Thrust

(a) Foreland W. of Moine Thrust
Lewisian Gneiss and Torridon Sandstone.

(b) Moine Thrust zone.
Cambrian formations including Durness Limestone.

(c) E. Moorlands.
Moine Schists.

Glaciation

Few rock outcrops.

Boulder clay cover
practically continuous
throughout the region.

Numerous glacial lakes.

Recent deposits & Soils

Deep peat covers boulder
clay.

Some areas of blown sands
(machairs).

Soils usually poor.

Vegetation & fauna

Uniform.

Low peat moorland with
heather dominant.

No trees.

Fauna very scanty.

Climate

Oceanic.

Climate very uniform
throughout.

Gales very severe.

Rainfall moderate.

Temperature range low.

Glaciation

Extensive rock outcrops,
much glaciated.

Glacial deposits scattered.

Numerous glacial lakes.

Recent deposits & Soils

Peat in valleys & hollows.

Some blown sand & alluvium.

Soils varied, good on
Durness Limestone.

Vegetation & Fauna

Varied.

Wet high moorland types of
vegetation dominant.

A few wooded areas in
sheltered places.

Fauna abundant.

Climate

Oceanic.

Marked contrasts between
coast and interior.

Gales frequent on coast.

Rainfall very heavy inland.

Temperature range higher
inland than on coast.

IV. FACTORS LEADING TO CONTRASTS IN POPULATION
CONDITIONS BEFORE 1886

West Lewis1745-1800

An isolated region.

Slight increase in population.

Population dependent on agriculture, fishing and industrial work.

Subsistence agriculture only.

Introduction of potatoes very important.

Standard of living low.

1800-1850

No Clearances and few changes in settlement pattern.

Population increase constant and density considerable.

Some emigration especially after 1844 (assisted).

1844 change in land ownership.

Some increases in rent.

Decline in subsidiary employment.

Fishing mainly of local importance.

Agriculture primitive, subsistence only.

Congestion on the land and subdivision of holdings: increase in cottars and squatters.

Potato famine cause of much distress.

Living conditions very poor.

West Sutherland1745-1800

Extremely isolated and inaccessible.

Considerable increase in population.

Population dependent on agriculture and fishing.

Subsistence & some commercial agriculture (sale of cattle) outside the region.

Introduction of potatoes very important.

Standard of living low.

1800-1850

Large scale Clearances & establishment of sheep farms.

Major changes in settlement pattern and redistribution of population.

Overall increase in population with fluctuations.

Considerable emigration after 1820 (assisted, sometimes enforced).

1829 change in land ownership.

Considerable increases in rent. Attempts to establish subsidiary employment not successful.

Fishing stations established, some export of fish.

Crofters restricted to subsistence agriculture: farms well managed and prosperous.

Congestion in crofting town: some subdivision & increase in cottars.

Potato famine cause of much distress.

Living conditions poor for crofters.

1850-1886

Continued increase in population.
 Serious congestion on the land, continued subdivision of holdings, increase in numbers of cottars and squatters.
 No changes in settlement pattern (one large farm only).
 Great expenditure by proprietor to assist all Lewis.
 Very little emigration.
 Slight increases in rent.
 Croft rents very low.
 No improvements in agricultural practices.
 Widespread poverty and distress.

1850-1886

Decline in population set in 1871
 Continued congestion in 'eviction' townships.
 Some further Clearances
 more large farms established.
 Acreage under deer forest increased after 1870.
 Great expenditure by proprietor throughout county but Duke of Sutherland's improvements did not affect west parishes.
 Considerable emigration (assisted).
 Further increases in rent.
 Croft rents moderate.
 Improvements in agricultural practices.
 Poverty and distress in crofting townships.

V. ENQUIRIES INTO CONDITIONS WITHIN THE CROFTING DISTRICTS

West Lewis

Napier Report 1883

Acute congestion on land.
Much subdivision of
holdings, numerous
cottars and squatters.
Holdings very small.
Agriculture primitive.
Rents low.

Deer Forest Commission 1892.

Special treatment advoca:
:ted for Lewis owing to
its exceptional circum:
stances.

Practically no land
available for addition
to crofters' holdings.

Fraser Report 1888

Existence of destitution
confirmed.
Crisis attributed to
congestion and immediate
reduction in population
advocated.

Brand Report 1902

Lewis the most backward
area in Scotland.
Land question insoluble.
Industrial work advocated.
Destitution alleviated
by ad hoc grants.

Lewis Local Committee Report 1903

Many of this committee's
suggestions rejected by
Secretary of State on account
of lack of local cooperation
in the past.

West Sutherland

Napier Report 1883

Crofters' holdings very
small.
Too much land under deer
forest and sheep farms.
Transport inadequate.
Fishing facilities
inadequate.

Many suggestions made for
enlargements to existing
holdings and for new
holdings.

No special enquiries for West Sutherland

West Lewis (contd.)West Sutherland (contd)Dittmar Report 1905

Housing conditions stated
to be appalling - no
improvements in 100 years.

Maxwell Report 1906

Rating problems acute.
Local administration
impossible without
outside aid.
Crofter's rates low.
Proprietor's rates excessive.

Hilleary Report 1938

Lewis problems stressed
as unique in Highlands.
Persistence of congestion
in spite of some
depopulation.

Lewis Association Reports
1943 -

Crofts not economic units.
Subsidiary employment
essential.
Congestion persists.
Population ageing.
Agricultural improvements
required.

Commission on Crofting
1951

Unique conditions in
Lewis have already
been stressed.

Hilleary Report 1938

Extreme conditions of rural
depopulation in these
parishes emphasised.
Fullest exploitation of
resources advocated.

No comparable association
in Sutherland.Commission on Crofting 1951

Enquiries proceeding.

VI. LAND SETTLEMENT AND VALUATION

1. LAND SETTLEMENT

West Lewis

1887-1912

A few areas allocated to crofters for grazing land: no other land available within the region.

1912 +

Some financial assistance granted under 1911 Act. After failure of Lord Leverhulme's schemes for Lewis, Galson farm was granted to the crofters in 1923. Crofter fishermen's holdings constituted in Ness.

Present land settlement pattern

Exclusively a crofting area except for two small farms.

No deer forests.

No woodlands.

West Sutherland

1887-1912

Many big enlargements were made to the grazing lands of numerous townships. Some small farms broken up and some large farms reduced in size for additional crofters' holdings.

1912 +

Few applications made for assistance under 1911 Act. Important land settlement schemes followed 1919 Act, especially in Durness parish.

Present land settlement pattern

Crofting townships mainly coastal.
Large sheep farms (especially in Durness.)
Smaller grazing and mixed farms.
Large deer forests.
Increasing acreage of woodland.

2. VALUATION

West Lewis

Rentals from agricultural land exceed those from non agricultural.
Average rent per holding £2.
Total rentals £3,296:16:3.
Total rateable value £1,277:5:3.

West Sutherland

Rentals from non-agricultural land exceed those from agricultural land.
Average rent per holding (all holdings) £21:16/-.
Total rentals £12,986:13:10.
Total rateable value £7,982:10/-.

VII. LAND UTILISATION

1. AGRICULTURE

West Lewis

(a) General features

All agricultural land classed as hill farming land (although at low altitude).
Marginal land.
Entirely subsistence type of farming but none are supported by agriculture alone.
All Government assistance for agriculture available.
Special provisions for marginal land production available.
Special assistance schemes for crofting districts available.

West Sutherland

(a) General features

All agricultural land classed as hill farming land.
Marginal land.
Mainly subsistence type of farming with sale of sheep and cattle outside the area. Some are supported by agriculture.
All Government assistance for agriculture available.
Special provisions for marginal land production available.
Special assistance schemes available for crofters

West Lewis(b) Crofting

37 crofting townships.
 Average number holdings per township 38.
 Average number persons per holding 5.
 Townships mostly linear.
 Conditions fairly uniform throughout the region.
 Many open crofts.
 No croft an economic unit.
 Many cottars on the crofts.
 Many squatters on the common grazing.
 Holdings all very small.
 Limited rough grazing land, much of it of very poor quality.
 Much land over grazed.
 Numbers of cattle declining - dairy breeds favoured.
 Quality of cattle improving.
 Numbers of sheep excessive.
 Quality of sheep poor.
 Management of sheep improving.
 Arable crops for home use, much import also necessary.
 Restricted area of machair well used.
 Small scale experimental work proceeding.

(c) Sheep farms

Two small sheep farms only, mainly Blackfaced sheep, some Leicester.

West Sutherland(b) Crofting

52 crofting townships.
 Average number holdings per township 11.
 Average number persons per holding 3.
 Townships varied in shape.
 Much variation within the region.
 Few open crofts.
 Few crofts economic units.
 Many crofters work more than one holding.
 Few cottars, no squatters.
 Holdings mostly small.
 Extensive rough grazing lands, with some excellent summer pastures.
 Much land under grazed.
 Numbers of cattle increasing
 beef breeds favoured.
 Some attested cattle.
 Numbers of sheep not excessive.
 Quality of sheep excellent.
 Management of sheep very good.
 Arable crops for home use, much import also necessary.
 No true machair land.
 Improvement schemes proceeding in some townships.

(c) Sheep farms

Very large hill sheep farms on Durness Limestone. Also smaller farms elsewhere.
 N. Country Cheviot sheep kept.
 Grazing farms mainly: hill grazings worked in hirsels.
 Sale of wether lambs and cast ewes and wool main sources of cash income.
 Numerous improvement schemes proceeding.

2. FORESTRY

West Lewis

None.

West Sutherland

A few areas of wood land.
An important recent
afforestation scheme in
Eddrachillis giving part
time employment to crofters.

3. SPORT

West Lewis

None

West Sutherland

Important in all three parishes
especially in Assynt and
Eddrachillis.
Provides part time and full
time employment.

VIII. FISHING

West Lewis

Good fishing grounds.
Dangerous coast.
No good harbours.
Great decline in
20th century.
Much expenditure of
public funds in the
past to assist fishing.
No participation in
Stornoway fishing now.
Small scale white fishing
for domestic use only.
No commercial fishing
except very few salmon
and some lobsters.

West Sutherland

Good fishing grounds.
Dangerous coast.
Few good harbours.
Decline in 20th century.
Expenditure by proprietors
only for fishing industry.
No participation in E.coast
fishing now.
Small scale white fishing
mainly for domestic use.
Successful establishment of
fishing station L.Clash 1948.
Salmon netting, Clachtoll.
Part time lobster fishing
especially Tarbet, Scourie.

IX. OTHER OCCUPATIONS1. MININGWest Lewis

Very limited resources -
none worked today.

West Sutherland

Large reserves dolomitic
limestone, also feldspar,
Minerals not worked -
isolation a great handicap.

2. MANUFACTURINGWest Lewis

Harris Tweed industry
very important source
of income. Crofters -
weavers only men
employed.
Valuable part-time employ-
ment for crofters.
Also employs cottars and
squatters.
Industry now depressed.

West Sutherland

None

3. TOURISTWest Lewis

None.
Few tourist attractions.
Housing bad.

West Sutherland

Small and expanding.
Valuable source of revenue
to the region.
Handicapped by isolation
and poor transport.

X. POPULATION

West Lewis

Total population 6,070.
 Population density
 37.5 per sq.mile.
 Population exclusively
 rural.
 Dense rural population.
 Congestion on the crofting
 land the main population
 problem.
 Population beginning to
 decline.
 Population now ageing
 and becoming unbalanced.
 Much emigration after
 First World War.
 Permanent emigration has
 now declined.
 Temporary migration for
 employment continues.
 Large numbers of children
 in crofting townships.
 Birthrate high.
 Births exceed deaths.

West Sutherland

Total population 2,176.
 Population density
 3.3 per sq.mile.
 Population almost exclu:
 :sively rural.
 Very sparse rural population
 Continuous rural depopula:
 :tion the main population
 problem.
 Depopulation far advanced.
 Population has aged and
 become unbalanced.
 Little emigration after
 First World War.
 Little permanent
 emigration now.
 Temporary migration for
 employment continues.
 Very few children indeed
 especially in crofting
 townships.
 Birthrate very low.
 Deaths usually exceed
 births.

XI. SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

1. TRANSPORT

West Lewis

No railways in Lewis.

Road transport from
Stornoway.

Good bus services.

Easy access to a town
(Stornoway).

No through routes.

Roads being improved.

West Sutherland

Railhead at Lairg (45 miles
minimum distance).

Road transport from Lairg.

Mail bus service only (once
daily).

Freight rates excessive.

No town within daily reach.

No through routes.

Roads being improved.

2. PUBLIC HEALTH

West Lewis

Housing very bad.

Many black houses.

Some improvement since
1930s.

Two roomed houses average.

Much overcrowding.

Lack of piped water supply.

Electricity available.

Little land for housing
sites.

Medical provision very
good, specialist advice
and hospital treatment
available in Lewis.

Much tuberculosis.

West Sutherland

Housing generally good.

No black houses.

Much improvement since 1930s.

Four roomed houses average.

No overcrowding.

Lack of piped water supply.

Electricity not available.

Housing sites less difficult.

Medical provision adequate
but much handicapped by
isolation and lack of
transport.

Hospitals and specialist
advice on east coast only.

Little tuberculosis.

3. EDUCATION

West Lewis

Large schools throughout the region.

Average number of pupils per school 106.

Secondary and technical schools in Stornoway.

96% population speak Gaelic and English.

West Sutherland

Small schools in villages - most children must be transported large distances daily.

Average number of pupils per school 15.

All senior secondary and technical schools on East coast only.

75% population speak Gaelic and English.

4. RELIGION

West Lewis

Strict Sunday observance.

Free Church largest congregation.

Church of Scotland well represented.

Small Free Presbyterian congregation.

Resident C.of S. and Free Church ministers.

No Episcopal congregation.

No R.C.congregation.

West Sutherland

Strict Sunday observance.

Church of Scotland largest congregation.

Free Church well represented

Small Free Presbyterian congregation.

Resident C.of S.ministers.

Visiting Free Church ministers.

Visiting Free Pres.ministers.

No Episcopal congregation.

No R.C.congregation.

5. SOCIAL

West Lewis

Organised activities for young people mainly.

Very few activities for married women.

Social activities of Stornoway accessible.

Gaelic mods well attended.

National organisations of less interest than local ones.

West Sutherland

Organised activities for all people.

Usual rural activities for all women.

No town within access for social life.

Gaelic mods well attended.

National organisations well represented and patronised.

XIII. ANALYSIS OF THE EVIDENCE

72 Marked contrasts in the population conditions of
West Lewis and West Sutherland were apparent as long ago as
the sixteenth century. In the description of Sutherland
in Camden's Britannia, 1596, we read that "the misery of the
inhabitants arising from the severity of the soil prompts
29 them to frequent emigration." Dean Monro, however, in his
account of Lewis written in 1594, describes the island as
"faire and well inhabite at the coste, and fertile and
fruitfull countrey." From these accounts it is evident that
the sparsity of population in Sutherland was closely related
to the physical environment but, although Lewis is still
"well inhabite at the coste" it could no longer be described
as "fertile and fruitfull". Even today, it is still much
easier to account for the very sparse population of West
Sutherland, than it is to explain the congestion on the land
which persists in West Lewis.

I.

The contrasts that have always existed between these two regions are numerous: their population densities and distributions have never been alike, their settlement patterns have always varied and each has been influenced by varying geographical, historical, economic and human factors.

A general comparison of the population conditions of the two regions shows that the smaller island area has much

the greater total population, and also the greater population density. The figure for the latter, i.e. 37.5 per sq.mile, does not in itself suggest a condition of congestion. This figure, however, represents the average density for West Lewis and it does not reflect the fact that the population is exclusively rural, that it practises the most primitive type of subsistence agriculture in Britain, and that it is concentrated into large townships of very small holdings, which form a crowded, and exclusively peasant, community. West Lewis holds a much greater population than could be supported by even the most intensive exploitation of its meagre natural resources; that is, it is an over-populated or congested area.

In West Sutherland, on the other hand, the total population is only one third of that for West Lewis while the population density, (which is the lowest in Scotland), is only one tenth of that for the island region. This density of population, i.e. 3.3 per sq.mile, although unduly low today, bears a direct relationship to the natural resources of the region, in spite of the fact that its present distribution (excluding the uninhabitable mountains and moorlands) was determined as much by historical factors as by its physical geography. Moreover, the fact that the economy of West Sutherland is both commercial and domestic, suggests that it has attained a more advanced level of economic development than West Lewis. This is reflected in

its more varied settlement pattern and in the higher degree of specialisation in the functions of its small communities.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

II.

Except for the fundamental difference that Lewis is an island and Sutherland is on the mainland, their geographical locations are markedly similar. Although they differ greatly in area, both are within approximately the same latitudes and both have north westerly exposures.

In accessibility, Lewis undoubtedly and unexpectedly, has the advantage today for good air services give rapid transport facilities for passengers and mails to Stornoway and the inevitable alternative, by sea, though slow, is ideal for transporting all bulky commodities and it is infinitely cheaper than long haulage by rail and/or by road. West Lewis, too, has the great advantage of easy access to Stornoway which is only 10 miles from Barvas and is easily reached by bus from all the townships of West Lewis. This, however, is a development of recent times and there can be no doubt that the complete isolation of the island in the past led to the breeding of a distinctive and self supporting island race which developed an extremely strong attachment to its home land. Indeed, this feeling was always so strong that, although it necessitated the subdivision of their lands and the acceptance of low living standards as

the population increased, nevertheless the people of Lewis preferred to remain at home rather than to emigrate.

West Sutherland, the remotest part of the mainland of Scotland, is still markedly peninsular in character and, if accessibility is measured in time and if transport of goods is considered in terms of freight rates, then Sutherland is at a serious disadvantage when compared with Lewis.

Nevertheless with the present sparse population, the great distance from a town, and the difficult terrain, it is difficult to see how air travel could be provided or how road transport facilities could be much improved. If, however, Lairg, the railhead, could be developed as a town of reasonable size and made the focus for the county, this would be of enormous benefit to the whole of the north and west.

It would mean a town was within daily access of each village and this might be an effective check to rural depopulation.

Before the "Forty Five" few strangers visited West Sutherland but the chieftains and many of the clansmen often went away from home although there were no roads or bridges in the region itself until the nineteenth century. Thus, in spite of inaccessibility, there has been some contact with the rest of Scotland for a long time, and from the time that sheep were introduced into the county at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the effect of outside influences has been to improve the general condition of agriculture and especially of the management of stock.

Thus the insularity of Lewis seems to have been a deterrent to progress but the accessibility of Stornoway today helps to prevent a large scale migration away from the rural areas. The peninsularity of Sutherland, on the other hand, has not excluded the ultimate arrival of outside influences but the extreme isolation today is a direct cause of the continuous depopulation.

III.

An examination of the physical environment suggests that neither region would be expected to support a high density of population. Also, on account of their respective positions and resources, it is more than probable that their permanent populations will always be predominantly rural.

In Lewis, climate and geological formations are inimical to good agriculture; the coast is inhospitable, shelter is lacking, and it is surprising therefore, to find this dense rural population when the only favourable factor is relief. In West Sutherland, the rugged relief and the mountainous interior render a large proportion of the region uninhabitable. Nevertheless, in spite of the great limitations imposed by the physical environment, there are considerable stretches of good agricultural land and also reserves of minerals, both being associated with the Durness Limestone formations. On geographical grounds, therefore, the further exploitation of the varied resources of this

region is quite possible and it should be possible for a greater density of population to be maintained.

Thus a comparison of the physical environments of the areas, bearing in mind their differences in area, suggests that West Lewis holds too great a population whereas the population of West Sutherland is much too small.

B. HISTORICAL SURVEY

IV.

Until the end of the eighteenth century both regions were extremely isolated and inaccessible and the standard of living of their people was very low. The economies of the two areas differed, however, for in Lewis the people were dependent upon subsistence agriculture, fishing and industrial work but in Sutherland the scanty population was entirely dependent upon agriculture or fishing. Moreover, the agricultural pursuits in Sutherland included some commercial as well as subsistence agriculture but good agricultural land was very limited in extent. Also, the mountainous interior had already been under deer forest for many centuries. Thus even before the Clearances the settlement patterns and economies of these two areas were markedly different.

In the first half of the nineteenth century revolutionary changes were brought about in Sutherland by the Clearances. Great sheep farms were established on all

the best lands especially on the Durness Limestone, and the small tenants were removed to the coasts where their new holdings were so small that their agricultural activities were restricted to subsistence farming. All the commercial agriculture of the region passed into the hands of the large sheep farmers. By the middle of the century the Clearances were practically complete, the gap between the conditions of the farmers and the crofters widened steadily and some of the latter were forced to emigrate. Thus it was the Sutherland Clearances which caused the beginnings of rural depopulation in that county.

Conditions in Lewis during the first half of the nineteenth century were very different from those in Sutherland. The major difference was the absence of any Clearances in West Lewis, thus no new sheep farms were established, and no redistribution of the population took place. In 1811 Lewis was described as "incomparably the
 28 most backward in agriculture and in the general state of the inhabitants of all the Western Isles." (Macdonald). These conditions did not improve as the century progressed yet the population continued to increase in spite of the decline in the kelp industry in the 1820s, of the potato famine in the 1840s and of the lack of any commercialised agriculture. This increased population was only maintained by subdividing existing holdings and by squatting on the grazing land.
 32 In the 1840s the parish ministers stressed that the land
 33

alone could not possibly support the population which it held.

Within the next few decades, Sir James Matheson spent over £300,000 in attempting to improve the conditions of the people at home and in assisting them to emigrate.

Unfortunately, he received little response and in spite of this vast expenditure very little progress or improvement resulted at home, and very few Lewis men were willing to

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emigrate or to seek work elsewhere. In 1851 it was stated that the Lewis people had taken advantage of the generosity of the proprietor and that the distribution of charity had demoralised them. Emigration was advocated as the solution to the problem, but it did not take place. Instead, the illegal subdivision of holdings continued, agricultural practices did not improve, and neither fishing nor industrial work could keep pace with the rapid increase in population.

From the middle of the century onwards the contrasts between the two regions became more and more accentuated.

The Duke of Sutherland, like his counterpart in Lewis, had expended vast sums of money on his lands but in West Sutherland, except for giving direct assistance for emigration, this expenditure did little to help the crofters. By 1870 a decline in population had set in in West Sutherland and many crofters had already emigrated. By this time too, the sheep farms had begun to decline in prosperity and although the crofters asked for some of these lands to enlarge their own holdings their requests were refused and instead the

estate established further deer forests. Thus the poverty and distress in the crofting townships continued yet in spite of these difficulties some improvements in agricultural practices were noted, lessons learned from the Border sheep farmers who had come into the county. In Lewis, as the nineteenth century progressed, so the population problems increased for the majority of the inhabitants preferred to remain within their own island instead of emigrating or seeking employment elsewhere. Thus land congestion became a critical issue and when further enquiries were commenced in 1872, it was stated once more that there had been much highly undesirable subdivision of the crofters' holdings which were already too small.

24 Thus when the Napier Commissioners made their enquiries in 1883 they found that the crofters' holdings in both these regions were much too small. They also found other problems and grievances common to both areas but their respective proportions and their respective causes were entirely different. By 1883 the Sutherland crofters, who had suffered much on account of the Clearances, were finding it impossible to obtain a living and they were insistent in their claims for more and better land. The Commissioners agreed that too much land, suitable for crofter occupation was, at that time, under sheep farm or deer forest. They also stressed the problems of remoteness and sparsity of population in this region. In West Lewis, however, the

Commissioners found a much more difficult situation.

24 The island, at that time, was "seething in a chronic state of discontent". But West Lewis had experienced no Clearances and as the population in the townships continued to increase the people had to depend progressively more and more on fishing and on industry. Nevertheless they were adamant in their refusal to leave their rural homesteads and consequently the problems of congestion on the crofts, of landless cottars and of squatters became increasingly acute. There can be no doubt that most of the problems of the Lewis crofters were of their own making as they had consistently subdivided their holdings in defiance of estate regulations. Nowhere else in the Highlands and Islands had the difficulties of the crofters become so acute and nowhere else did they appear as insoluble as here.

V.

The problem of all the crofting districts received very careful consideration after the passing of the Crofters' Act in 1886. When the Crofters' Commission fixed fair rents for all the crofting townships of West Lewis and West 47 Sutherland between 1887 and 1890, big reductions were made in Lewis and a large proportion of the arrears were cancelled. This action reflected the very low valuation of the Lewis holdings and the great poverty of the people since their lands were already the lowest rented in Scotland

and their rents had not been increased for many years.

In West Sutherland, on the other hand, where rents had been increased within the last few decades, the overall reductions in rent were much less than for Lewis and there were fewer arrears. Thus the alterations which were made in rents there served to equate the rents against land values and also to adjust rents where recent increases had been made.

In 1892 the Deer Forest Commissioners showed that with respect to deer forest land, both regions were somewhat
 54 exceptional. West Sutherland had much more land under deer forest than most crofting areas, whereas West Lewis had much less. Hence, the Commissioners were able to make constructive suggestions for enlarging and improving the West Sutherland holdings and grazing lands but for West Lewis the congestion on the crofts was already so acute that there was virtually no land that they could schedule for crofters' use.
 54 The Commissioners emphasised that Lewis required separate and entirely different treatment from any where else owing to the smallness and subdivision of the holdings, to congestion on the crofts and to the poverty of the people. They were not, however, able to suggest a feasible solution, other than emigration and the increase of industrial work. Both these had been advocated many times before but with very little response.

The unique circumstances of Lewis led to a remarkable number of special investigations for the island being made

between 1886 and 1906. All of these emphasised once more that a desperate situation had developed within the rural townships owing to causes which had been mentioned many times before and to the accompanying poverty of the people. It was
55 pointed out in the Fraser Report (1888) that the reduction in population that had been advocated in 1851 had never taken place and the "listless apathy" referred to there was attributed to "the baneful effect of subsistence on eleemosynary aid" (from the proprietor). The Medical Officer in Lewis attributed the distress in the townships to over-population, a condition which had arisen mainly because of the insistence of the Lewis people to remain within their own
31 island. The Brand Report of 1902 emphasised that Lewis had the most pressing problems to be found in all the crofting districts and that it was undoubtedly the most backward and
56 primitive area in Scotland. Again in 1903, when the Lewis Local Committee was asked for specific information and suggestions, its recommendations were queried by the Secretary of State for Scotland because the people of Lewis had consistently refused to avail themselves of facilities offered to them in the past. Similar observations were made concerning housing and rating when these problems were investigated in
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59 1905 and 1906 respectively. Thus all these enquiries showed that over-population was undoubtedly the cause of the poverty and distress found throughout the West Lewis townships at the beginning of the twentieth century and it is equally certain

that this condition of congestion was of the crofters' own making.

Since 1886 also, much financial and practical assistance has been given for improvements of all kinds for the crofting districts, especially in connection with housing and with agriculture. Improvements in both these directions, however, have been easier to implement in Sutherland than in Lewis as there has been more land available for agricultural developments and the crofters have usually been in a better position financially to undertake obligations for loans for building purposes. For these and other reasons there have certainly been more improvements of all kinds in Sutherland since 1886 than there have been in Lewis.

60 Within the last decade the special case of Lewis has once more ~~has~~ been brought to the notice of the public. This time the instrument of publicity is the Lewis Association. The reports of this association show that, in spite of the reduction in population which has now begun, and of the increasing importance of non-agricultural work, there are still more people in the Lewis townships than the island's resources can support. At a recent conference in Stornoway (1951), the economic plight of the island was discussed once more and special provisions were again requested to increase the wage earning powers of the crofters. It was not admitted by the islanders, however, that there

are too many crofts and that subsistence agriculture, which gives a poor return for a large expenditure of labour, cannot support the present population at a reasonably high standard of living even with part time industrial work to provide a cash income. The fact that the conditions in Lewis are unique has also already been noted by the Commission on Crofting which was set up in 1951.

There were no special enquiries for Sutherland at the beginning of the present century and there is no association there comparable to the Lewis Association. However, in the Hilleary Report of 1938, at recent conferences of County Planning authorities, at meetings of the Highland Panel and in the findings of the West Highland Survey, it has been shown that West Sutherland has suffered more rural depopulation than any other region in the Highlands. Its problems, however, being similar to those of other parts of the Highlands, are more readily understood outside the region than are the strange conditions which exist in Lewis.

C. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SURVEY

VII.

As the contrasts in the settlement patterns of these regions are partly due to differences in the physical environment (notably to differences in relief and to the presence of the Durness Limestone formations in Sutherland)

the general patterns in both regions are similar to what they were in 1886. West Sutherland retains its crofting areas, its sheep farms, its deer forests, its small areas of woodland and its tiny villages, but West Lewis is still exclusively a crofting area, with no sheep farms, no deer forests and no non-agricultural land. Since 1886, however, there have been some changes in land settlement in West Sutherland but practically none in West Lewis.

47 The enlargements granted by the Crofters' Commission in Sutherland and the new holdings which were established there, greatly relieved the land question in the townships but the prosperity of agriculture was still seriously handicapped by isolation and by inaccessibility. The Land Settlement Act of 1919 enabled further lands from the sheep farms in Durness parish to be made available for small holders. Nevertheless, in spite of these concessions and improvements, the population has continued to decline as there is insufficient employment in the region to provide the necessary cash income required to sustain a decent standard of living today.

24 In West Lewis an entirely different situation exists.
54 In 1886, the Napier Commissioners said (and in 1892 the Deer Forest Commissioners repeated) that there could be no solution to the problem of congestion on the land within the region itself as practically all the land was already under crofter occupation. Thus there was no land available for crofters'

use, except the sheep farm at Galson. This farm was ultimately granted to the crofters in 1923 when some of the "skinned land" was also reclaimed for them in Ness. However, the great pressure of population which existed on the land continued, yet it did not lead to any diminution in numbers until after 1921 when it became apparent to returning ex-Service men that there was no means of livelihood for them in the region and no other means of support. As a result many sought work elsewhere or were obliged to emigrate. Even so, there remains a dense rural population living under primitive conditions in the crofting townships of West Lewis. All are classified as agricultural subjects, yet none derives an adequate income from the land.

These important contrasts in the land use patterns are reflected in the respective valuations of the two areas as well as in their population conditions. West Lewis, on account of its low rental and its relatively dense population being exclusively rural, has very meagre financial resources for local works and maintenance. West Sutherland is also very far from wealthy (on account of its very sparse population) in spite of the high rateable value of its non-agricultural land. When the two areas are compared it is evident that Lewis is a much greater burden on national funds than Sutherland as it contributes very little towards the cost of local expenditure and its much denser population is less self-sufficient financially.

VII.

The contrasts in land utilisation between these two regions are due to differences in their physical environments and in their respective settlement patterns. West Sutherland, therefore, has a varied pattern of land use, but West Lewis is exclusively a crofting area. In both regions, however, all agriculture is heavily subsidised and the maximum amount of assistance is available. The significance of crofting in these two areas is very different. In Sutherland, provided the crofters have sufficient grazing land, they can derive some income from agriculture. Thus many of them work more than one holding or they rent additional grazing land. In Lewis, the croft is simply a home and in order to retain a foothold in their homeland, the Lewis crofters have been dividing and subdividing their holdings ever since the crofting system was established. Thus, in addition to the crofters there are numerous cottars and squatters who greatly aggravate the congestion on the land. In West Lewis the townships are much larger than those of West Sutherland and although the individual holdings are often smaller, they have an average of 5 persons per holding as against 3 in Sutherland. Another contrast between crofting in the two areas is the fact that in West Sutherland the common grazings are extensive and of good quality but in West Lewis they are too small, of poor quality and often overstocked.

Crofting methods in Lewis remain primitive in most townships and overstocking of the common pastures is a frequent practice. There have, however, been some improvements in the stock in recent years and some experimental work is now being carried out. Economically these small scale enterprises are far from sound and undoubtedly more and better agricultural produce could be obtained if groups of crofts could be amalgamated into well run modern farms. The displaced people would have to disperse and some would have to leave the island. As long as the existing legislation for the crofting districts remains, this will never come to pass for the islanders value their independence before all else and if the prosperity of their supplementary sources of income can be restored they will be well content. Such a state of affairs existed in 1947 when the West Lewis crofter was in effect, a self-employed industrial wage earner whose cost of living was low and who obtained the maximum financial benefits available for all agricultural subjects, and for crofting tenants.

In West Sutherland crofting is much more of an agricultural enterprise than it is in Lewis. Some members of the crofter families have always sought work elsewhere, but when the cost and the standard of living were lower than they are today, this region held a denser population which was largely self supporting. As in Lewis, it is

impossible to make a living from a single holding today, therefore either some supplementary employment is required or the tenants must work more than one holding. As the latter practice is common in West Sutherland now, many crofters work what is really a small pastoral farm. This is not possible everywhere however, as the population is ageing rapidly and hired labour is scarce and expensive. The effect of establishing larger farms would be to reduce the scanty population still further unless it were accompanied by substantial development of other types of employment such as fishing, forestry, rural industry and tourism.

Some of the difficulties of the crofting areas in Sutherland are also felt on the sheep farms which can no longer be worked to their full capacity as it is becoming impossible to obtain shepherds who will live in the exceptional isolation of the distant hirsels. Isolation and inaccessibility are thus deterrents to agriculture here as well as to the exploitation of other resources and in addition the heavy freight rates to be paid by the farmers over the long road distances from the railhead make costs of supplies for agricultural use excessively high.

Thus a comparison of agriculture in the two areas shows that West Sutherland is much more important agriculturally than West Lewis. Its agriculture is more specialised, more commercialised, more advanced and more progressive in its outlook. The smaller region, however, is the one whose

population is exclusively rural yet the majority of its inhabitants are dependent on non-agricultural sources of income. The population of West Sutherland is almost too small for its present agricultural pursuits; in West Lewis it is far bigger than the land could ever support.

Apart from agriculture, the other types of land use, namely sporting land and woodland are confined to West Sutherland. Both provide important part time occupations for the crofters of that region but no such source of supplementary employment exists or can exist in Lewis.

VIII.

Commercial fishing has declined almost to extinction in West Lewis in spite of the large sums of money expended to assist it early in the present century. In West Sutherland too, commercial fishing has declined, but lobster fishing is still a remunerative part time occupation and other fish have been landed in increasing quantities in recent years. A fishing station was established at Loch Clash in 1948 and salmon netting at Clachtoll offers seasonal employment for a few local people.

IX.

Mining and quarrying do not constitute sources of employment in either region. Although West Sutherland possesses valuable reserves of dolomitic limestone and also feldspar, their exploitation is not, at present, an economic

proposition. Thus West Sutherland has possibilities for development in the exploitation of her mineral resources but this is not the case in West Lewis.

The Harris Tweed industry is an excellent part time occupation in a crofting district and it is particularly valuable in that it employs male labour during slack times on the land. In West Lewis, however, weaving has become much more than a part time occupation for an agricultural population: in fact, it constitutes the main source of cash income for the majority of the population, especially for the cottars and squatters. Unfortunately, the Harris Tweed Industry is subject to great fluctuations in prosperity thus the present depression in the industry has caused much unemployment and serious distress such as the island has experienced many times before in its history. Moreover, the tendency to neglect the land during boom periods in industrial activities, leaves it in poor condition when it once more becomes necessary to work it for subsistence. There is no part time industrial work available in West Sutherland.

Whereas the Harris Tweed industry is confined to West Lewis, the tourist trade is confined to West Sutherland. There, it already provides a valuable source of income and it can be much developed in the future, if the difficulties of isolation can be overcome by the provision of better transport facilities. West Lewis, in spite of transport

advantages, offers few opportunities for the tourist trade as it has neither attractive scenery, nor sporting facilities nor accommodation.

Thus the position regarding supplementary sources of income in the two regions is very different. West Lewis has always been largely dependent on non-agricultural pursuits but, with the exception of seasonal work, West Sutherland has not. In Lewis, moreover, even when industries have declined, this has not necessarily led to a decline in the population: instead, the maximum population has remained at home existing as best it could on its own meagre supplies of food, on charity and on small sums of money contributed by members of the family away from home. In Sutherland, however, a decline in the source of income has always led to diminution of the population which, therefore, has always borne a more direct relationship to the prosperity of the region than has ever been the case in Lewis.

Today, it appears that there are no further opportunities for the exploitation of the resources of West Lewis but there are opportunities, on a small scale, for the expansion of quarrying or mining, afforestation, the tourist trade and inshore fisheries in West Sutherland. Hence it follows that the population of West Lewis is almost certain to continue the decline which set in in 1921. In West Sutherland, however, it should be possible to check the continuing depopulation as has been shown by the success of the recent forestry

works in the parish of Eddrachillis.

X.

The population conditions of the two areas today still show great contrasts in density, in composition and in distribution. West Lewis, in spite of some depopulation since 1921, is still a congested area: in West Sutherland, however, continuous rural depopulation has reduced the total population almost to evacuation point. In West Sutherland today the population is very unbalanced: it is ageing very rapidly; the proportion of unmarried people is unduly high; the number of deaths exceeds the number of births, and there are very few children at all, especially in the crofting townships. In West Lewis the population is also beginning to age and to become somewhat unbalanced but the birth rate is still high (as it has always been) although the numbers of families is smaller than formerly. In Lewis therefore, while some further depopulation is economically desirable it is a smaller, well proportioned and more varied population that is required, not a population whose total has been reduced by the emigration of all its most enterprising and industrious inhabitants.

The attitude to emigration has always been quite different in the two regions. On the mainland it was long ago considered inevitable but in Lewis it was strongly resisted and it was not until 1921 that large numbers left the island to make permanent homes overseas. There have,

however, always been many from both regions, who have been employed away from home, some on a temporary, some on a permanent basis.

The population differences between the two regions greatly influence the provision of educational and health services, of roads and transport facilities, they affect the social and religious life of the communities and they influence the housing situation and the question of water and electricity supplies. Indirectly, too, an ageing population as in Sutherland or a classless society as in Lewis is further handicapped for it has few inhabitants who are either able or willing to shoulder responsibility and it is difficult to find people to act as local representatives or who will assist in organising community life.

XI.

An examination of the social geographies of these two regions shows that the provision of transport, health and educational services is much simpler in West Lewis than in West Sutherland on account of its accessibility by sea and air, its proximity to a town and to its greater density and more even distribution of population. With regard to their respective cultural, religious and recreational activities, however, it appears that, in spite of the difficulties of isolation and sparsity of population, the mainland region is, paradoxically, the more progressive. Insularity, thus seems

to be as strong a retarding influence in these respects, as
it is in checking economic advancement.

XIV. CONCLUSIONS

The economic plight of Lewis received much publicity in February 1951 when an important conference was held in Stornoway in an attempt to solve some of the island's present problems. But as has been shown, the present situation is merely the latest phase in a situation which has persisted for many generations. In rural Lewis a well balanced economy has never been attained. The crofters, valuing their freedom and independence most of all and combining with this an intense love of their native island, insist on retaining a small plot of land, they are determined to keep their rural status and they will not countenance the modification of the crofting system or the alteration of the Crofters' Acts. The concerted and successful methods which are now being made to intensify agricultural methods and to increase production can only help to improve the general standard of living, they cannot provide an adequate cash income. As in the past, the main source of income must come from non-agricultural pursuits. If the Crofters' Acts are changed as a result of the present enquiry, many of the abuses of the existing system will disappear. But even then the situation in Lewis will not be encouraging, and a continuation of the depopulation which began in 1921 will be both inevitable and desirable.

A report on Sutherland which appeared in April 1952

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stressed that Sutherland is an extreme example of the Highland problem. The depopulation which has been continuous there for so long was the inevitable response to changing conditions. It has now proceeded to such an alarming extent, that it is recognised that "unless something
90 of an unusual nature is done immediately the county will become a desolation, and depopulation will become complete." It should be possible, however, for the existing population to be maintained and even to be increased provided that the exploitation of all the natural resources including fishing, forestry and tourism as well as agriculture, can be made an economic proposition. It would also be of great benefit to this large and scattered district if Lairg could be developed as a proper urban centre. West Sutherland is a very extreme case; nevertheless, it shows the situation which can arise if other areas are allowed to follow suit.

An examination of the available evidence shows that the remarkable contrasts which exist between these two regions have been determined by the interaction of very varying factors. The situation in West Sutherland bears a direct relationship to geographical, historical and economic factors; it is comparable to similar rural areas in the Highlands of Scotland and indeed, in other parts of the World. The congestion in West Lewis, however, is less easy to explain. Nevertheless, the fact that West Lewis, in common with other congested areas in Western Europe, houses a peasant community

in an insular location which for long was very remote and inaccessible, is undoubtedly of major significance.

The main reasons, therefore, for the persistence of congestion in West Lewis and for the continuation of rural depopulation in West Sutherland seem to be as follows:

(1) Location. The insular location of Lewis and the mainland position of Sutherland. This fundamental difference has greatly influenced the histories of the two areas, the characteristics of the people and the effects of the impact of external influences.

(2) Physical Environment. The differences in the physical environments help to influence the contrasts in population conditions but they are not adequate to account for them.

(3) Settlement. West Lewis is a peasant community while West Sutherland has a varied settlement pattern. These contrasts (which are partly due to differences in the physical environment) are of fundamental importance as they determine the differences in the economies of the two areas and also greatly influence their social geographies.

(4) Economy. The economy of West Lewis is basically a domestic one. This uniformity and lack of commercialisation is very wasteful of labour, it is a deterrent to all economic advancement and is largely responsible for the region maintaining its dense and poor rural population. West Sutherland's economy, although partly domestic in the

crofting townships, is much more commercialised and more specialised than that of Lewis: the region therefore is only able to support a relatively smaller population but it has more opportunities for advancement.

(5) The Clearances. In Sutherland the Clearances caused the beginnings of rural depopulation: in Lewis there were no Clearances thus the natural increase in population was able to continue unchecked and no redistribution of the population took place.

(6) Emigration. Although emigration from Lewis was advocated and assisted in the 19th century, it was very unpopular with the islanders. Thus the lack of emigration at that time was a direct cause of congestion. In Sutherland, the Clearances necessitated emigration, which was thus greatest in the middle of the 19th century. From this time onwards the population has continued to decline.

(7) Charity. The over generous provision of charity in Lewis by Sir James Matheson had a demoralising effect upon the crofters. Without it, the population would undoubtedly have been reduced, either by emigration or by starvation. In Sutherland the crofters were obliged to be more independent and those who could not support themselves at home had to leave.

(8) Standards of living. The lower standard of living which has always been a feature of Lewis makes it possible for that region to hold a much greater density of population

than could correspondingly exist in Sutherland.

(9) Birth and death rates. The birth rate in Lewis has always been higher than in Sutherland or in other nearby mainland areas. Today, the death rate in Sutherland is high, owing to the rapidly ageing population. These factors favour the persistence of congestion in Lewis and of depopulation in West Sutherland.

(10) The Gaelic tradition. It has been shown that the strength of the Gaelic tradition in Lewis has accentuated the insularity of the inhabitants and has probably retarded progress. Thus indirectly it has contributed to the condition of congestion in the townships. Gaelic is still spoken in Sutherland but its influence is not sufficiently strong to affect the economy of the region in any way.

(11) Accessibility. The fact that West Lewis is within easy access of Stornoway and of the mainland facilitates the provision of urban advantages and amenities. This factor, however, cannot be considered as a reason for congestion; it acts rather as a prevention of large scale depopulation. In Sutherland, inaccessibility has been stressed as one of the major drawbacks to the region for a very long time; it is certainly a direct cause of continuing depopulation today.

(12) Transport. The nearness of West Lewis to Stornoway plus the dense rural population makes possible the provision of good internal transport facilities (by road).

This again is not a cause of congestion but a prevention of depopulation. In West Sutherland, although the inaccessibility plus the sparsity of the population makes the provision of better transport almost impossible, nevertheless the inadequacy and the high cost of the present transport system are major deterrents to the full exploitation of all the natural resources and are therefore direct causes of continuing depopulation.

(13) Characteristics of the people. The insistence of the people of Lewis to remain within their own island has been the main cause of congestion within the Lewis townships for at least 150 years. In Sutherland, however, the people are more progressive and therefore the limitations of the physical environment together with adverse economic conditions made depopulation inevitable.

These then are the main reasons for the persistence of congestion in West Lewis and for the continuation of depopulation in West Sutherland. It is evident that while geographical, historical and economic factors have all played their parts in both regions, in West Lewis it has been the insular location and human and sociological factors which have been of paramount significance. There are, indeed, many valid reasons why the population of West Lewis should have declined considerably for many years but the absence of this feature can only be explained by the complex character of the Lewis people themselves.

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